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ABSTRACT

"Adventures in Assessment" is an annual journal of the system for Adult Basic Education Support (SABES), a comprehensive training and technical assistance initiative for adult literacy educators and programs. SABES accomplishes this goal through staff and program development workshops, consultation, mini-courses, mentoring, peer coaching, and other training activities provided by five Regional Support Centers located at community colleges throughout Massachusetts. The first three volumes present a comprehensive view of the state of practice in Massachusetts through articles written by adult literacy practitioners. Volume 1, "Getting Started," includes start-up and intake activities; volume 2, "Ongoing," shares tools for ongoing assessment as part of the learning process; volume 3, "Looking Back, Starting Again," focuses on tools and procedures used at the end of a cycle or term, including self, class, and group evaluation by both teachers and learners. Volume 4 covers a range of interests, and volume 5, "The Tale of the Tools," is dedicated to reflecting on Component 3 tools of alternative assessment. Volume 6, "Responding to the Dream Conference," is dedicated to responses to volumes 1-5. Volume 7, "The Partnership Project," highlights writings from a memtoring project for practitioners intersted in learning about participatory assessment. Volumes 8-11 cover a range of topics, including educational reform, workplace education, learner involvement in asseessment, etc. (MN)

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Adventures in Assessment
Learner-Centered Approaches to Assessment and Evaluation in Adult Literacy
1991-1998

System for Adult Basic Education Support
Boston, Massachusetts

Funded by the Massachusetts State Department of Education

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SABES

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Learner-centered
approaches
to assessment &
evaluation
in adult literacy

Volume 1

Getting Started

adventures in ASSESSMENT

November 1991

Funded by the Massachusetts Department of Education

SABES

System for Adult Basic Education Support

SABES is the System for Adult Basic Education Support, a comprehensive training and technical assistance initiative for adult literacy educators and programs. Its goal is to strengthen and enhance literacy services and thus to enable adult learners to attain literacy skills. SABES accomplishes this goal through staff and program development workshops, consultation, mini-courses, mentoring and peer coaching, and other training activities provided by five Regional Support Centers located at community colleges throughout Massachusetts.

SABES also maintains an adult literacy Clearinghouse to collect, evaluate, and disseminate ABE materials, curricula, methodologies, and program models. Each of the five SABES Regional Support Centers similarly offers program support and a lending library. SABES maintains an Adult Literacy Hotline, a statewide referral service which responds to calls from new learners and volunteers. The Hotline number is 1-800-447-8844.

The SABES Central Resource Center, located at World Education, publishes a statewide quarterly newsletter, "Bright Ideas," and journals on topics of interest to adult literacy professionals, such as this volume of "Adventures in Assessment."

The first three volumes of "Adventures in Assessment" present a comprehensive view of the state of practice in Massachusetts through articles written by adult literacy practitioners. Volume 1, Getting Started, *included start-up and intake activities. Volume 2,* Ongoing, *shares tools for ongoing assessment as part of the learning process; Volume 3,* Looking Back, Starting Again, *focused on tools and procedures used at the end of a cycle or term, including self, class, and group evaluation by both teachers and learners. Volume 4 covered a range of interests. Volume 5,* Tale of the Tools *was dedicated to reflecting on component 3 tools of alternative assessment. Volume 6,* Responding to the Dream Conference, *was dedicated to responses to Volumes 1-5. Volume 7,* The Partnership Project, *highlighted writings from a mentoring project for practitioners interested in learning about participatory assessment. Volume 8 covered a range of topics from education reform to learner involvement in assessment. Volume 9 looked at assessment in a volunteer program, native language literacy, ESOL programs, and evaluations in workplace education programs.*

We would like to see your contribution, especially if you are doing native language literacy or low-level ESOL literacy. Contact editor, Alison Simmons, to discuss your submission.

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adventures in ASSESSMENT

Learner-centered approaches to assessment & evaluation in adult literacy

Volume 1

Editor: Loren McGrail

Assistant Editor: Laura Purdom

November 1991

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Introduction

> *"Constructing new images of adults--images built on assumptions of dignity and competence, of literacy as reflective and self-critical practice, and of learning as participatory--requires that we rethink or reconceptualize not only our notions of what counts as literacy but also our methods of inquiry--the processes we use to document and assess learning."*[1]

Across Massachusetts, literacy programs are struggling with a common concern--learner assessment. To assess levels of literacy and English language proficiency and to document progress, programs likely use one or more of these methods: standardized testing, materials-based assessments, competency-based assessment, and participatory assessment.[2]

The primary purpose of this guidebook is to explore participatory assessment or learner-centered approaches to assessment and evaluation. Participatory literacy education is "based on the belief that learners, their characteristics, aspirations, backgrounds, and needs should be at the center of literacy education."[3] Participatory assessment means a collaborative relationship among learners and program staff in determining the goals, texts and contexts of assessment, as well as in judging its outcomes.[4]

A few key principles guide alternative forms of assessment. The most important principle is that assessment must be done with the learner and not to the learner. Second, it must be integrated into instruction--it should inform curriculum development which inturn provides feedback that will make programs more effective.[5]

By definition, participatory assessment or learner-centered assessment, differs from program to program, teacher to teacher, and learner to learner. However, a tool kit of assessment procedures as suggested by Hemmendinger[6] and Auerbach[7] might include activities around the following three components:

- **Start-up or Intake Activities**
- **Along the Way or On-going Activities**
- **Looking Back or End of Cycle Activities**

The first issue of *Adventures in Assessment* looks at "Start-up" activities. Some of the tools included here aim to get a sense of student interests and goals as they enter a program. As Auerbach says, "They provide base-line data about what students can already do with language and literacy, how they think about it and what they may want to do as a result of instruction."[8]

Volume two of *Adventures in Assessment* will focus primarily on-going assessment activities, the ways we document learning as it takes place and the ways we integrate it into instruction. However, we are open to receiving submissions on any activities or tools that you have developed that may be defined as participatory or learner-centered. We are also interested in readers responding to articles, especially if the article is used to experiment with the ideas or tools described.

The first piece, "Assessment Issues" synthesizes the various articles I have read about alternative assessment. It was first published in 1990 as a working paper for SABES as an attempt to put forth for readers why the topic of evaluation and assessment has become so critical to the field of adult education.

In "Partners in Evaluation," **Johan Uvin**, a workplace ESOL teacher, emphasizes that evaluation is an integral part of curriculum development. He describes the challenge of striking a balance between evaluation needs and preferences of all who have vested interests, from learners to funders. He believes evaluation encompasses three levels: assessment of participants, evaluation of the program, and evaluation of organizational change.

Lucille Fandel describes the importance of uncovering themes and issues as an integral part of initial assessment in "Getting in Touch." She relates how she adapted and created tools that help her and her Latino students make the link between lesson content and their goals for learning English.

Janet Kelly, in her article describes her own "Assessment Adventures" and illustrates what assessment looks like in a whole language ABE program. She uses a portfolio approach to show how initial and early assessment information eventually becomes a comprehensive record of ongoing assessment. In future volumes, Janet will share her work in on-going reading and writing assessment. Following Janet's piece is a related article by **Lindy Whiton.** Her "Down and Dirty Miscue Analysis," elaborates on one of the evaluation tools Janet describes.

Martha Germanowski documents the development of "The Education Goals Assessment Packet," how it started and how it looks now. Her model illustrates how we can use and adapt other peoples ideas and tailor them to fit our needs. Her packet also illustrates how skills can be integrated with goals.

In his introduction to "Alternative Assessment: An Annotated Bibliography," **Don Robishaw** argues against traditional standardized quantitative approaches in favor of alternative approaches which help practitioners "set up structures for improving learning opportunities and "inform the development of curriculum which is based on the learners evolving progress."

While each of these writings falls (loosely) under the theme of start-up activities, there are other lenses through which to view them. The most obvious is that they are written by adult basic education and English as a second language practitioners. Though the ABE/ESL lens may be helpful, you might want to also pay attention to what a whole language approach (Kelly) and a participatory approach (Fandel and Uvin) have in common and how they differ. You might want to look at how these practitioners have adapted others ideas, forms and methods for their own purposes, and how they have made the tools their own (Germanowski).

It is our hope that this guidebook will become a resource by and for practictioners to select and adapt tools for their own contexts. The development of this resource depends upon program-based practitioner research, the results of which will help develop the field of adult education.

–Loren McGrail, editor

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4 Lytle, S. "Dimensions of Adult Literacy: Toward Reconceptualizing Assessment," *ibid.*

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8 *ibid.*

Assessment Issues: Research and Practice

by Loren McGrail

In recent years the subject of testing and assessment in adult literacy and education has become a focus of growing concern, both nationally and locally. Decisions about the nature and purpose of assessment are critically important to literacy policy and practice at all levels. Adult learners, teachers, administrators, and funders all agree that what programs choose to assess and the methods they employ affect the quality of teaching and learning. Assessment in adult literacy is a central issue with high stakes: "The authority vested in these tests can determine the way programs are developed, what is taught, and the climate of teaching and learning. It shapes legislation and funding policies of public and private agencies. It is tied to welfare eligibility for young parents. It drives government job training programs. It can deny entry into military, or crucial access to a diploma or a job." (*Business Council for Effective Literacy Newsletter* No. 22,January 1990)

The Mandate

In April of 1988 Congress passed legislation which called for the use of standardized tests to evaluate all adult basic education (ABE) and English as a second Language (ESL) programs funded under the Adult Education Act. These Adult Education Amendments (Public law 100-97) and the implementing regulations of the U.S. Department of Education (August 1989) require that the results of standardized tests be used as one indicator of program effectiveness and that at least a third of local programs which apply for federal ABE funds (administered in Massachusetts by the DOE) should be evaluated through the use of standardized tests. (see *BCEL Newsletter*, No.22, January 1990)

While the federal mandate for standardized assessment in ABE and ESL is objectionable to many, it is also a sign that adult education has come of age, for the need for accountability often accompanies the investment of significant resources.

The mandate, however, also highlights the growing concern of literacy practitioners, theorists, and test designers about what standardized tests actually test and for what purposes.

As standardized tests have come into sweeping use, so have complaints about them and their validity. For many the most important question is, do the test results tell us anything of real value either about learner progress or program effectiveness?

> *The teachers evaluated me to find out how much I knew and compared me with the rest of the class. It made me feel small.* --Carmen Ferino

The Debate

The use of standardized testing most likely derives in part from their relative ease of administration and what is viewed by some as their reliable and objective, quantitative data on the achievement, abilities, and skills of students–data that is free from individual judgement. Because the tests and the conditions are (theoretically) constant, they are thought to be useful indicators of individual progress over time (pre- and post- testing). Thus, by extension, they are thought to be useful indicators of program effectiveness.

According to Susan Lytle of the University of Pennsylvania, the chief spokesperson and advocate for alternative forms of assessments, these charges of "quantifiable and reliable data" for program evaluation are questionable at best. For Lytle, ("From the Inside Out: Reinventing Assessment" in *Focus on Basics,* Volume 2, Number 1, Fall 1988), the equation of learner progress assessment--defined as increased reading levels--with program effectiveness is problematic for two reasons: 1) It ignores other legitimate criteria for evaluating a literacy program like the quality of the curriculum, teaching, or its connection to significant social issues relevant to students lives and interests; and, 2) it fails to recognize that increases in reading scores have little to do with the way adults live and use literacy in the real world.

So, despite the relative ease of administrating tests, few adult educators are satisfied with the quality of information revealed and many more are deeply dissatisfied with the effects such testing has had on teaching and learning. In a special 1989 issue on alternative assessment from the Literacy Assistance Center in New York, this grievance was articulated clearly: "There seems to be considerable agreement among adult literacy practitioners that the TABE (whether it be the 1976 or 1987 edition) is not only an inappropriate instrument for individual assessment, but it does not inform the teaching and learning process, and it in fact may act to discourage students as they re-involve themselves in the educational process."

Other practitioners and theorists agree with Lytle and Johnston (1986) that by assessing only decontextualized subskills like word recognition, paragraph comprehension, and vocabulary, we fail to measure the ways in which adult learners already can and do use literacy in their daily lives. Still others argue that because the tests focus on product rather than process, they tell us very little about the affective or metacognitive factors in literacy acquisition.

Even Dr. Thomas Sticht in his report to the U.S. Department of Education, "Testing and Assessment in Adult Basic Education and English as a Second Language Programs," advocates that, "It may be desirable to separate testing for program accountability from testing for instructional decision making." His advice should provide some guidance to literacy and ABE programs caught in the eternal conflict of how to be accountable to the funders and the public in a quantifiable way and how to create ways for teachers to use assessment tools and processes that are an integral part of teaching and learning and that can inform curricula.

The call for alternative forms of assessment is coming from all directions, including many mainstream and professional organizations and educators. Elsa Auerbach of the University of Massachusetts in her book, *Making Meaning, Making Change,* quotes the Board of Directors of the International Reading Association's its 1988 statement: "Reading assessment must reflect recent advances in the understanding of the reading process. The IRA is concerned that instructional decisions are too often made from assessments which define reading as a sequence of discrete skills that students must master to become readers. Such assessments foster inappropriate instruction."

Alternative Assessment Approaches/Tools

How is student assessment conducted?

- oral interview
- tests (what kind? standardized/program-developed?)

- performance standards (measure of competencies?)
- collections of student work (writing samples?)
- observation of classroom interactions?
- self-report
- on-going documentation (teacher reports?)

What counts as progress?

- reading level gains?
- test scores?
- affective gains in self-confidence, etc.
- ability to use language/literacy outside the class?
- ability to make personal, family, school, classroom and/ or community changes?

(Auerbach, 1990)

A few key principles guide what constitutes alternative assessment. The first is that it must be "program-based" and "learner-centered". The second is that it should help the learner achieve his or her goals. In other words, what is assessed must reflectwhat the learner wishes or needs to accomplish. Third, the process must build upon the learner's strengths, not deficits; it must be a process that is done *with* the learner and not *to* the learner. Fourth, assessment should be part of the learning experience--"an on-going collaboration between the teacher, the learner, and the text, to review, and refocus what should take place in light of progress being made." Fifth, it should not depend upon a single procedure but a variety of procedures. And most important it should provide feedback that will make programs more effective (*BCEL Newsletter*, January, 1990).

By definition, learner-centered assessment differs from program to program, teacher to teacher, and learner to learner. However, a tool kit of assessment procedures that communicates respect for adults, for what they bring with them to the learning experience and for why they have come might include the following:

In-take or start-up activities to get a sense of student strenghts, interests, goals and needs. These initial interviews can be helpful in planning lessons as well as providing data about what students can already do with language and literacy and how they think about it. They can be done atthe beginning of a cycle (pre-instruction placement tool) or they can be integrated into instruction. They include:

- informal interviews
- reading samples
- writing samples
- goal-setting activities.

Along the way in-class activities that document learning as it takes place. These activities are integrated into instruction on a regular basis. They include:

- journals kept by students
- journals kept by teachers
- portfolios or writing folders
- anecdotes.

Activities at the end of the cycle that reflect learning, teaching, curriculum and program design. They often involve both teachers and learners together and include:

- student self-evaluation charts or check lists
- peer interviews
- student-teacher conferences
- class or program evaluations. (Hemmendinger, 1988)

The Future: Directions and Implications

Along with learner-centered or participatory approaches to adult education, the alternative assessment movement is based on recent cross-cultural and ethnographic research. This research provides support for the notion of "many literacies" or "multiple literacies"--diverse literacy practices where by learners connect literacy to their everyday life and find ways to determine for themselves the conditions under which they will use reading and writing. Brian Street, Shirley Brice Heath and Scribner and Cole, by focusing on the social, political, and economic nature of these practices, tell us how standarized tests don't reflect universal literacy but rather, "attribute value to particular literacy conventions."

The measurement (standardized tests) of these conventions are what funders and legislators use to determine program accountability and effectiveness. Lytle believes this is due in part to the fact that funders lack good information about the qualitative effects of programs on learners' lives. She advocates two basic strategies to remedy this situation. The first is to invite wider participation in the conversation about alternative assessment. The second is to conduct program-based practictioner research simultaneously across the country to strengthen these new conceptual frameworks and to exchange and critique innovative practices. Auerbach concurs with Lytle that the cornerstone of qualitative research is documenting what happens, when it happens,or the teacher's ability to know the students, and to notice and record their development in a variety of areas.

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Partners In Evaluation[1]

Evaluating the South Cove Manor Nursing Home Workplace Education Program with Participants

by Johan Uvin

For me, one of the exciting aspects of being a Workplace ESL teacher at the South Cove Manor Nursing Home is that my job description is defined more broadly than in more traditional educational settings. As a teacher, I am not only responsible for instruction but for coordination and curriculum development as well, with assessment and evaluation being an integral part of the latter. In this article, I take the excitement that goes hand in hand with the planning and implementation of assessment and evaluation for granted and focus mainly on the challenges that the selection and design of appropriate assessment and evaluation procedures and activities created for me and how I resolved them. It is my intent that teachers with similar role definitions and in similar contexts will find my experiences useful in their own assessment and evaluation practice.

Context

The South Cove Manor Nursing Home Workplace Education Program was established in 1988 with funds from the National Workplace Literacy Partnership Program. The goal is to assure the quality of patient care by upgrading the communication skills of nursing assistants and entry-level workers in other departments of this bilingual nursing home on the edge of Boston's Chinatown. To achieve this goal, the nursing home administration and management collaborate with the Chinese American Civic Association who act as the learning provider. An Advisory Board consisting of representatives of each of the workplace, ESL classes, supervisors, licensed staff, teachers and managers meets regularly to discuss the planning, evaluation, and monitoring of the program as a whole. The meetings of the Advisory Board provided the context for the evaluation work that I describe in the remainder of this article.

Challenges

The first challenge for me was to strike a balance between the different evaluation needs and preferences expressed by all those who had a vested interest in the program: learners, teachers, supervisors, administrators, managers, sponsors, and funders. It was also important not to ignore my own beliefs about assessment and evaluation. Other factors I needed take into account were my own skills in assessing and evaluating, the limited resources that could be allocated to assessment and evaluation, and the evaluation guidelines as specified in the federal grant.

Getting Started

As with other planning tasks, I accomplished the planning and implementation of assessment and evaluation as a collaborative effort of all those affected by the program. I chose the meetings of the Advisory Board as the forum to facilitate direct communication on the issue between learners, teachers, supervisors, department heads, administors, managers, board members, and funders. The members of the Advisory Board engaged in a twomonth dialogue early on in the program to put assessment and evaluation objectives and procedures into place. Discussions evolved around these questions:

- What do we want to evaluate?
- What qualitative and quantitative information do we need?
- What information is already available at the nursing home?
- How are we going to collect, analyze, and interpret this information?
- Who will provide the information ?
- Who will collect the information?
- When and how often will the information be collected?
- Which resources can be allocated to the evaluation?
- How will the findings be used and reported?
- What should the findings enable us to do?

In preparation for these meetings, I listed the program goals and brainstormed possible objectives and procedures to evaluate them. Learners prepared as well. They shared their assessment preferences as part of the intake process. Participants filled out questionnaires about how they liked to learn and how they liked to be assessed. The questionnaire was adapted from Nunan[2] and asked these assessment related questions:

How do you like to find out that your English is improving? By

-- written tests?

-- teacher evaluation?

-- statements by your supervisor?

-- seeing if you can use what you learned on the job?

-- checking your progress by comparing your work (eg. tapes)?

-- ____________________

Do you get a sense of satisfaction from

-- teacher grades?

-- being told that you have made progress?

-- keeping a learning diary?

-- feeling more confident in situations at work and elsewhere?

-- ____________________

Clarifying Assumptions

As the members of the Advisory Board shared their evaluation needs and preferences, the need arose to clarify the beliefs about evaluation that surfaced in the discussion and to reach a consensus on what evaluation should entail. These statements reconcile the viewpoints of those involved.

Evaluation entails more than identifying the individual and group achievements of participants. A variety of procedures are needed rather than one single measure of outcome. Depending on the level and purpose of evaluation, activities are needed that show how learners and the program are doing as the program is growing (ie., formative evaluation) as well as activities that create opportunities to reflect on the achievements of learners and the program at set times (ie., summative evaluation). Evaluation activities provide qualitative as well as quantitative information and both kinds of information are considered equally valuable. Activities and procedures are compatible with the assessment and evaluation preferences of those involved. Evaluation encompasses three levels: assessment of participants, evaluation of the program, and evaluation of organizational change.

Evaluation activities facilitate the participation of the following people:

When assessing participants

- participants themselves
- teachers
- nursing home residents
- supervisory and licensed staff

The assessment of participants aims at identifying changes in learning and changes in the transfer of learning to the job.

Changes in these areas are documented:

- personal
- affective
- social
  (within as well as outside the classroom)
- oral language use
- written language use
- functional uses of English
  in the delivery of patient care
- functional uses of English
  outside the nursing home
- metacognitive
- other

When evaluating the program

- participants
- teachers
- supervisors and licensed staff
- administrators
- managers
- members of the Board of Directors
- funders
- representatives from CACA, the learning provider
- members of the Advisory Committee

Here the focus of the evaluation is on the program itself, that is, all the processes and resources used to bring about intended changes (eg., program design, the content and method of instruction, materials)

When evaluating organizational changes

- supervisors and licensed staff
- program coordinator
- administrators
- representatives from management

This level of evaluation aims at identifying organizational changes (eg., changes in the quality of care) and at clarifying the link between the education program and these changes.

Planning

Inspired by Feuerstein's participatory approach[3] to evaluating community development programs, I then facilitated the design of an evaluation plan.

This is the grid I used to represent the different planning decisions that needed to be made:

EVALUATION PLAN

Formative:

What? Why? How? When? Who? Conditions?

Summative:

What? Why? How? When? Who? Conditions?

To determine which procedures were feasible or not, certain criteria simplified the decisionmaking process. These were key: the time requirement needed to be low; cost needed to be moderate; the active involvement of workers and supervisors needed to be assured; procedures needed to be able to produce qualitative as well as quantitative information; program staff and learners needed to feel comfortable with the procedure; and program staff needed to have the skills to implement them.

Formative Evaluation

These are the formative evaluation and assessment procedures and activities the Advisory Board chose to find out how learners, teachers, and the program were doing along the way and that allowed for midstream monitoring: feedback sessions at the end or during each class; class observations by supervisory, licensed, and administrative staff; peer observation by teachers; observation and mentor coaching by the Program Coordinator in weekly meetings with the on-site staff; meetings with the administrator on a regular basis (ie., biweekly and when the need occurred); meetings with department heads, supervisors, and licensed staff; progress notes by teachers based on observation s within as well as outside the classroom; learning diaries and individual and group journals; individual conferencing with learners at the cycles' beginning and end and at several time throughout the cycle; meetings with the Advisory Committee (monthly); portfolios of learners' work; and learner writings and publications.

Summative Evaluation

These summative procedures and activities were selected and implemented with the completion of each 22-week cycle: learner self-assessments using checklists of functional uses of English as part of their individual education plan; teacher assessments of each learner using various reference lists to describe observed or reported changes and to analyze the learner's work; teacher assessments of the achievements of participants as a group (ie., percentage of objectives achieved over cycle); learner evaluations of the program in the form of discussions in the learners' native language; supervisory and licensed staff assessments of learners (ie., transfer of learning to the job) and evaluations of the program in the form of a questionnaire; resident assessments of learners and evaluations of the program in the form of a conversation with program staff at a coffee and donut party; coordinator and administrator reviews of nursing home records (eg., comparison of retention among participants and non-participants); and Advisory Board review of the program using key points drawn from the activities above.

A Sample: Learner Self-Assessment

Once a week in class participants filled out their learning diaries. By completing a number of sentences, learners documented on an on-going basis what they learned and studied and where they used English and with whom. They also specified what was difficult for them and what their learning and practicing plans were for the coming week.

The idea for the learning diaries came from David Nunan[4]. I adapted Nunan's diary sheets, translated them into Chinese, made photocopies, and stapled the copies as a booklet with a cover sheet including the participant's name and cycle.

Several times during the cycle and at the cycle's end, I asked participants to review their learning diaries in class. I also used the diaries in the individual assessment of learners and generated and compared inventories of purposes learners used English for. This allowed the learners and me to identify gains made over time.

These were the statements I included in the diaries:

This week I studied...
This week I learned...
This week I used my English in these places

This week I spoke English with these people
This week my difficulties were...
I would like to know...
My plans for next week are...

Evaluating Assessment and Evaluation

The implementation of the initial evaluation procedures and activities revealed the benefits and shortcomings of the evaluation plan and necessitated its ongoing evaluation. Also, learners, teachers, supervisors, administrators, and managers became more proficient in articulating their evaluation needs and preferences and priorities changed over time.

To accommodate these changes, the Advisory Board did not only review the outcomes of the evaluation but devoted time and energy to the evaluation of the processes that generated the information as well. As the language skills of learners developed, for example, the learning diaries were replaced by less structured dialogue journals.

The on-going communication about assessment and evaluation between learners, teachers, supervisors, administrators, and managers, however, does not mean that the evaluation plan cannot improve. On the contrary, the Advisory Board had committed itself to continue to look for ways to assess and evaluate that specific to the program's goals, tailored to the resources of the nursing home, conform with the grant guidelines, and are compatible with the individual and cultural evaluation needs and preferences of those involved. This is, in my opinion, where the strengths of a participatory approach to evaluation lies.

References

1 Marie-Therese Feuerstein, *Partners in Evaluation: Evaluating Development and Community Programmes with Participants.* (London: McMillans, 1986), p. 1.

2 David Nunan, *The Learner-Centered Curriculum.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 190.

3 Feuerstein, p. 20.

4 Nunan, p. 134.

Getting in Touch: Participants' Goals and Issues

by Lucille Fandel

Project HABLE (Hispanic Adults Basic Literacy in English) at El Centro Del Cardenal provides basic English literacy classes and basic mathematics to students with limited English skills. The program has four levels of ESL. The experiences of levels one and two are described in this article.

The Participants

Level one is composed of people who come to the program with little or no English skills. Participants in level two may have some of the basics but are not yet able to converse or write easily in English. Both groups are Hispanic immigrants, sometimes with little formal education, generally between the ages of 21 and 45. There are many outside demands on the learners as they study English. Most are parents. Some also work outside the home. They may come to class late if the school bus fails to pick up their children or if they have been on an all night shift. They may not come to class at all if the children are home sick or on school vacation or if they are asked to work overtime. They have little time for homework. Nevertheless, the learners are highly motivated.

Two Experiences

What follows are accounts of my efforts to surface participants' goals and issues using two different tools. I do this at the beginning of each new cycle for two reasons: First, as Elsa Auerbach writes, "the essence of a participatory approach is centering instruction around content that is engaging to students." It is of primary importance to uncover themes and issues as an integral part of classroom interaction. This co-investigation "assures relevance of content," "shifts the balance of power" toward students gaining more control over their own

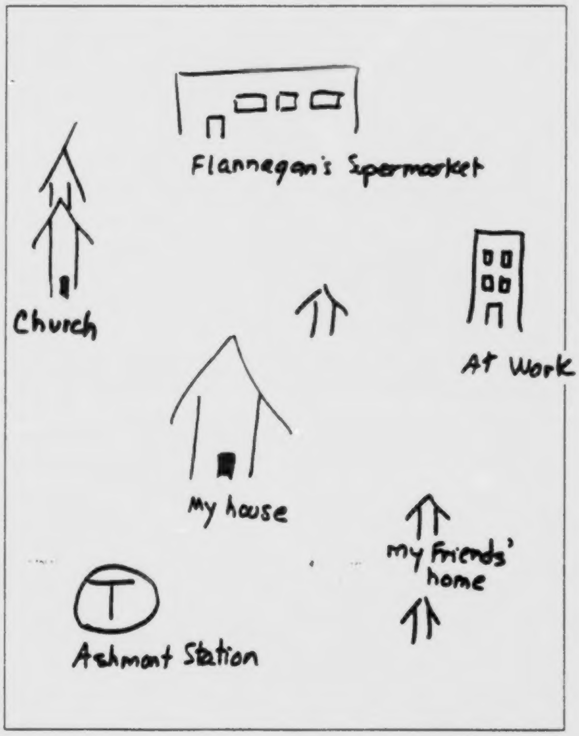

FIGURE 1

learning, and, in itself, helps develop "literate" skills.[1] A second important reason for surfacing goals and issues is so that, at the end of the cycle (and at any point during the cycle) I can dialogue with learners about their progress and whether or not the course is meeting their needs.

1. "Mapping Your Neighborhood"

Using "Mapping Your Neighborhood" a tool that I adapted from *English At Work: A Tool Kit for Teachers.*, [2] I ask participants to think about where they most urgently need to be able to use English given the various places where they live, work, recreate, shop, go for services, and visit. (NOTE: With level one students I use their first language to give instructions.) Using a piece of newsprint and a marker I then model the drawing of pictures of some of the places I go being careful to use examples the learners would be unlikely to copy. (figure 1) I then ask them to work in groups of three to do a composite picture of where they most need English.

I hang the pictures above the blackboard then ask individuals to tell more (in English, if they can) about the needs represented in the pictures. (figure 3) I also record this on newsprint and keep this list on the classroom wall for the duration of the cycle. Periodically, I refer to the list–for example as we move into a new theme--to encourage the sense that the lesson content is relevant to the interests they listed in the beginning of the cycle.

I also refer to the newsprint list at the end of the cycle as part of a mutual evaluation of our accomplishments as well as a reminder of skills yet to learn.

...in government offices
...with the receptionist
...in an interview
...in the market/store
...how to ask for what you want
...how to return or exchange things
...how to get your money back
...if the police stop you
...in the hospital
...with the receptionist
...with the person doing the intake interview
...telling where the pain is
...at home
...with my wife
...looking for work
...filling in an application form
...answering questions in an interview
...at work
...talking with the boss
...asking for overtime
...asking for time off
...to report in sick (by telephone)
...in an office
...vocabulary for office items

FIGURE 2

2. Where Do I Want to Go?

Within the HABLE program, each new cycle of classes might find some participants staying on at the same level and some new students joining them. Since some students repeat the class (and since I enjoy trying new things) I have tried a fresh approach to surfacing learners' issues and goals. This new tool from the U.K.'s Center for Research into Education of Adults. The Progress Profile [3] includes a "five questions," a progress review, prompt cards, and tutor notes.

The tool, according to its authors,

> is designed to help students, tutors and the organization to improve learning and teaching....It offers a framework that will assist students and tutors to plan, organize and monitor the work done...The purpose...is two fold. First,

1. WHERE DO I WANT TO GO?

Decide with your tutor what your general goals are

I WiLL Like can speak English to be a beautician

I would like to be able to

I Want WiLL can Learn understand and speak English To WiLL not need interpreter

I hope to achieve this by June 14 (date)

Signed ________________ Date 4/3/91

4. HOW FAR HAVE I GOT?

Gue what?

My Comments [illegible]

Write down what you feel more confident about

I can understand and Read better Than bifor bat to understand they have to speak verx sLowly

. . . and what you are still unsure of.

I need Learn more a Writing and spear

4/3/91

Tutor's Comments

Ask your tutor to write down her thoughts on your progress.

Liberata, I am happy you now understand more when you read and when someone spe
You are very intilligent and if you work a little harder you will progress faster
Try to speak a bit more in class.
I think you need to speak more before you go to level 3. Do you agree?

Agreed Comments

Discuss your progress with your tutor and list the things you agreed on.

FIGURE 3

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> students' learning is likely to be more effective if it is based upon their own definition of aims, and progress towards those aims. Second, [organizations] will be better able to evaluate and develop their provision if progress can be monitored within an agreed framework."[4]

The view of literacy on which the tool is based includes the ideas that there are multiple literacies, and that coping in one situation does not necessarily mean that a person is "literate" in other situations, that reading, writing, listening and speaking are all communication skills that involve interaction with spoken and written text, and that many interacting factors affect our ability to communicate.

I have used and adapted, the "Five Questions:"

1. Where do I want to go?
2. What do I need to learn?
3. How am I going to get ther?
4. How far have I got?
5. Where to next?

This tool has served our classes well in various ways:

At the beginning of a cycle...

- to let me know from the beginning of my time with a particular group how participants see their language needs;
- to let participants know that I consider their learning to be their responsibility-- that I expect them to set their own individual language goals; and
- to discover some of their issues around which we can do language work.

At the end of a cycle...

- to help participants look back and assess their own progress and
- to facilitate a conversation between each learner and myself regarding whether they should move on to the next level or not.

(Note: If a standardized test was also administered to a student at the end of a cycle we would also talk about these results too.) This would help avert a situation wherein a student felt the teacher had passed them over for "promotion" or pushed them to the next level before they felt ready to move.

Figure 3 is an example of what was shared by a level two participant.

Limitations

I did find some limitations to this tool:

- It is difficult for lower level students to understand what they have to do with this tool. This may be due not only to their more limited command of the language but also, in the case of many, to a lack of experience doing this kind of planning exercise. Higher level students have a much easier time with it.
- The process was tedious, especially for lower level students.
- The original material, as I received it, included some samples of goals which could be printed on a series of different index cards to give ideas to those students who needed them. These I adapted to fit what I knew might more likely be goals for a particular group. (appendix 1)
- Using these "cards" made the exercise easier and more satisfying for some. Others didn't need them.

I continue to use this evaluation tool with intermediate level students as it serves well to foster reflection--within teacher and students, informing and involving us all in the learning process.

References

1 Auerbach, Elsa , "Ways In: Finding Student Themes" in *Making Meaning, Making Change: A Guide to Participatory Family Literacy and Adult ESL,* (U.Mass Boston, 1990).

2 Barndt, Deborah, Mary Ellen Belifiore, and Jean Handscombe. *English at Work. A Tool Kit for Teachers.* (Center for Workforce Education, 1991)

3 ALBSU Research Project, *Progress Profile.* (Nottingham, England: Center for Research into Education of Adults, 1990)

4 *Ibid.*

Read/Write/Now Adult Learning Center Assessment Adventures

Janet Kelly

INTRODUCTION

The Program

Read/Write/Now is a small, library-sponsored program for adult beginning readers and writers in the north end of Springfield, Massachusetts. It was started in 1987 as a pilot project with a grant from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners to provide literacy services and to test a packaged computer literacy curriculum. Since then, it has become a whole language-based adult learning center which uses its six computers for producing and publishing learners' writing.

Curriculum and program development are continual processes that involve the contributions and collaboration of many talented teachers and committed learners. The materials that are included here are a result of this collaboration between teachers and learners. There is a much bigger file of things we no longer use than of things we use. If it does not work, we ask ourselves if we need it and if there is a good answer, we revise it. If it still does not work, we put it in the archives. I consider these assessment materials works in progress in the sense that, although they have been tried and revised, there is always room for improvement.

We have tried to develop assessment tools that work for learners and teachers as well as funding sources. What follows are some samples of assessment tools and descriptions of how we have used them for initial and early assessment. Materials for ongoing assessment and "then & now" assessment are referred to but not included with this article.[1]

Assessment in a Whole Language Classroom

Assessment in a whole language-based classroom is ongoing. It is an integral part of the program design and helps drive the process of developing curriculum. One of the goals of a whole language program is to empower learners by helping them to become more self-directed, to identify and work towards their own goals for learning, literacy, and life. A logical outgrowth of that goal is to incorporate learners' self-evaluation into the overall assessment activities of a program. Both learners and teachers need to know why they do what they do in a classroom so that they can have a sense of progress, as well as make decisions about future directions. One great motivator, especially in something as challenging as adult basic education, is for learners to clearly see and feel their own growth. Standardized tests do not measure growth in self-esteem, life skills, empowerment, community involvement, and self-confidence, *nor* do they truly measure the literacy skills that adult learners make in many programs.

Evaluation in a whole language-based program

Thanks go to Doreen Walsh and Don Robishaw, two creative teachers who worked at Read/Write/Now throughout this project.

is a learning activity as well as a process of adding to information about learners' progress, teachers' effectiveness, and ideas for curriculum development. Whole language assessment includes observation, interviews, learners' self-evaluations, and formal and informal analysis. Examples of each of these aspects of evaluation are included in this article.

Alternative assessment tools which are learner-centered and holistic rather than standardized and quantitative are being developed and used in many programs. Some of these programs describe themselves as whole language, some have a Freirean approach, and others have an eclectic approach to literacy education. All are concerned with evaluation for the purposes of increasing learners' and teachers' sense of empowerment as participants in the process of learning and explicitly understanding their own growth and progress towards meeting their goals. This kind of assessment is not concerned with measuring changes in behavior, but may use changes in behavior as evidence of increasing understanding, knowledge, and competence.

The question we try to keep asking ourselves about assessment activities is WHY? There should always be an answer to that question that relates to helping learners and teachers become empowered and active participants in the process of their own education and work. If there is no good answer to the WHY question, or the answer does not relate to the development of the program, the benefit of the learner and the teacher as members of a learning community, it is time to scrap the particular assessment activity.

Portfolio Assessment

Read/Write/Now uses a portfolio approach to maintain a comprehensive record of ongoing assessment. A learner's assessment portfolio contains: initial screening and placement interview, including a first writing sample, middle and later pieces from a learner's writing folder, dialogue journals, learning contracts, goals checklist, writing conference records, writing progress checklists, reading miscue analysis, book lists, reading conference records, student learning logs and other self-assessment materials, and publications of the learner's writing. Anecdotes and observations related to learners' progress are often kept in a running teacher's log and are included as part of the portfolio. (figure 1)

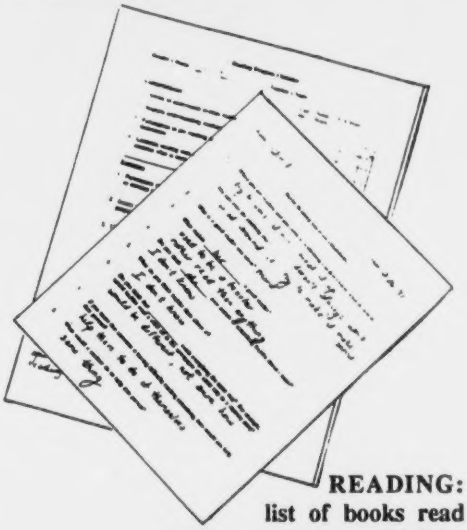
The learner's portfolio is added to and shared with the learner during regular conferences throughout the cycle and at other times when a learner needs to see concrete evidence of his/her progress. The portfolio can also be used to document progress to funders. Although this approach tends to be more comprehensive than many funders have time or interest in seeing, it helps to organize evaluation materials in a way that makes writing narrative summaries for funding reports easier.

Sample materials and notes for doing initial and early assessment follow. (See appendix 2 for a complete inventory of assessment tools used at Read/Write/Now.)

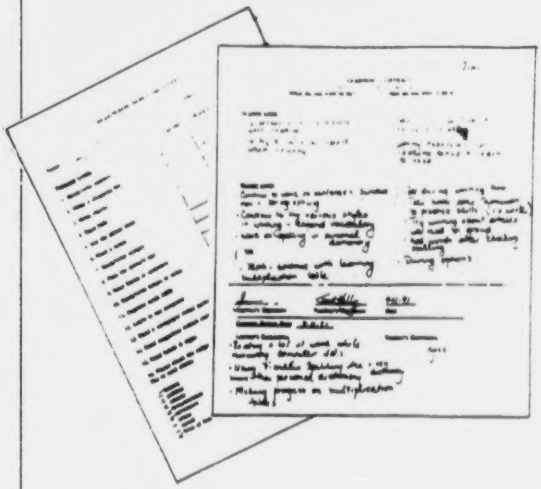
Initial Assessment
(before learner enters program):
Initial Screening & Placement Interview,
Slosson Oral Reading Test
Teacher-made comprehension exercise

Early Assessment
(first 3 weeks of class cycle):
- Goals Checklist
- Modified Burke Reading Interview
- Looking at Your Own Reading Behavior
- Miscue Analysis
- Reading Progress Checklist
- Writing Progress Checklist
- Learning Contract

WHAT'S IN A PORTFOLIO?

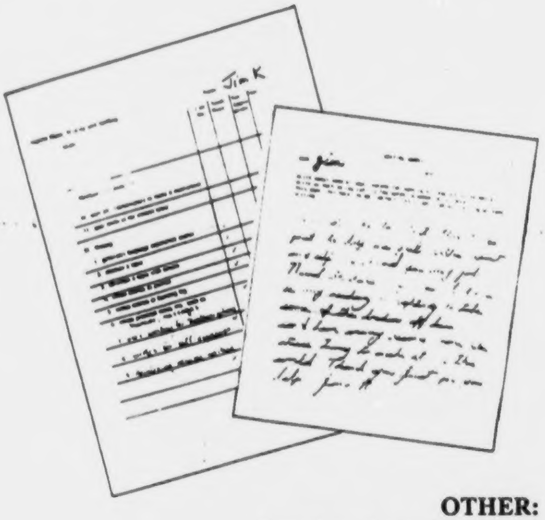


GOAL SETTING:
initial screening & placement interview, including Slosson score & responses to teacher-made comprehension exercise
goals checklist
learning contract



READING:
list of books read
reading progress checklist
looking at your own reading behavior
modified Burke interview
reading conference record
miscue analysis results

WRITING:
dialogue journal samples
first writing sample
other writing samples, dated
writing conference record
writing progress checklist
published writings



OTHER:
learning logs (student's)
teacher's logs (anecdotes/observations)
program and learner's self-evaluation materials
Slosson post-test, if applicable
math activities record

FIGURE 1

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INITIAL ASSESSMENT

Screening Process

Initial Contact. There is generally a 10-20 minute telephone contact, before potential new students come in for a screening interview, during which learners have a chance to tell their story and describe their needs while a staff person listens and offers encouragement. If it seems appropriate, the staff person describes the program and the intake process. If the learner's needs cannot be met by our program, care is taken to make referrals to other resources and the learner is encouraged to call back for more help if needed. If appropriate, a screening interview is scheduled at a time that is convenient for learner and staff and bus route information and directions are given.

Screening/Placement Interview. This usually takes 30-45 minutes, sometimes longer. The overall purpose of this interview is to make learners feel positive about their decision to pursue their goals for literacy, to introduce them to the way the program works, and to get a picture of the learners' goals, experience with education, and some of the skills they will bring to learning.

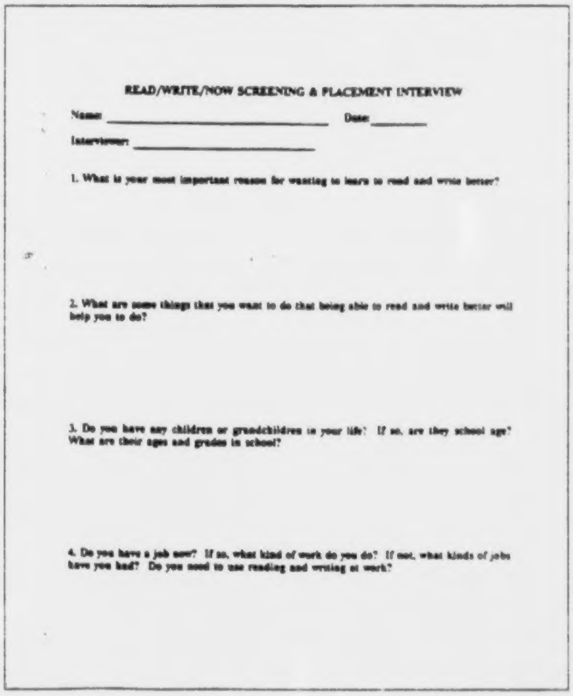
The interview is conducted in this framework:

a. Make the learner feel as comfortable as possible; this may involve offering coffee, acknowledging the fact that s/he has already done the hardest thing, which was to take the first step by coming to the interview.

b. Tell the learner what will happen and how long it will take. Encourage the learner to ask questions at any point. Assure her/him that everything s/he discusses with the interviewer is confidential and that if s/he is uncomfortable at any time in answering a question or doing something that is part of the interview, to say so.

c. Ask the learner if s/he would mind writing her/his name, address, and phone number on a sheet of paper. Offer help as needed. This serves the dual purpose of getting information and letting a learner who can write these things without help feel good about doing it. If a learner cannot write her/his name, it lets the interviewer know how to adapt some of the other tasks involved in the rest of the interview.

d. A three page interview form (figure 2, appendix 3) is used to ask the learner about her/his goals, uses for reading and writing in her/his life, and experiences with learning in the past. The interview also includes some questions designed to get at the learner's commitment to learning and any barriers s/he feels s/he will need to overcome to reach her/his goals. The last item on the interview is a program policy statement regarding use of drugs or alcohol during class time by staff or learners which requires the signatures of learner and interviewer. The interview form is used as a guide, with staff asking the questions, adapting them as needed, and writing the learner's responses on the form.



READ/WRITE/NOW SCREENING & PLACEMENT INTERVIEW

Name: ______________________ Date: ________

Interviewer: ______________________

1. What is your most important reason for wanting to learn to read and write better?

2. What are some things that you want to do that being able to read and write better will help you to do?

3. Do you have any children or grandchildren in your life? If so, are they school age? What are their ages and grades in school?

4. Do you have a job now? If so, what kind of work do you do? If not, what kinds of jobs have you had? Do you need to use reading and writing at work?

FIGURE 2

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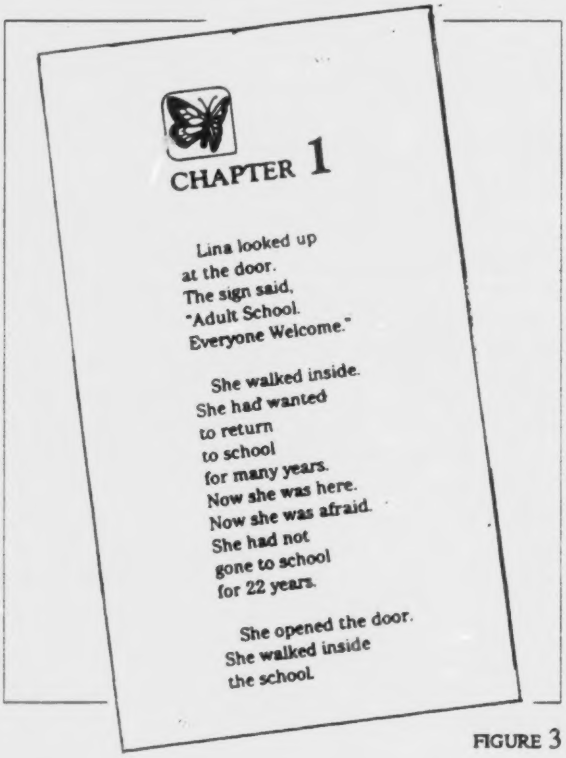
e. Describe the approach that the program takes, what classes are like, and encourage the learner to ask any questions s/he has at this point.

f. Teacher-made reading assessment exercise[2]. For learners who were able to write their name and reported some reading ability and experience in the interview, this is the next step. A teacher-made reading exercise is used to get a very general picture of a learner's comprehension, fluency and word recognition skills. This can be done in a number of ways. One way is to use a reading sample that is accessible to most adult learners (1.5 - 2.5 grade level), which is written in a natural, predictable style, and is a connected, comprehensible text. We have used a selection from the Tana Reiff book, *The Door is Open*, (Fearon). (figure 3 and 4) (See appendix 4 for Silent or Oral Reading Comprehension Quick Assessment Exercise.) Because it is about a woman returning to school after many years, learners can often identify with her fear in meeting the challenge. Discussing the reading becomes an opportunity to discuss the learners' own feelings about coming to school as an adult. It is often the first book learners ask to take home with them. It is written at a 1.6 - 2.9 grade level, according to the publisher, and we have found it is accessible to most, though not all of the learners we meet.



CHAPTER 1

Lina looked up
at the door.
The sign said,
"Adult School.
Everyone Welcome."

She walked inside.
She had wanted
to return
to school
for many years.
Now she was here.
Now she was afraid.
She had not
gone to school
for 22 years.

She opened the door.
She walked inside
the school.

FIGURE 3

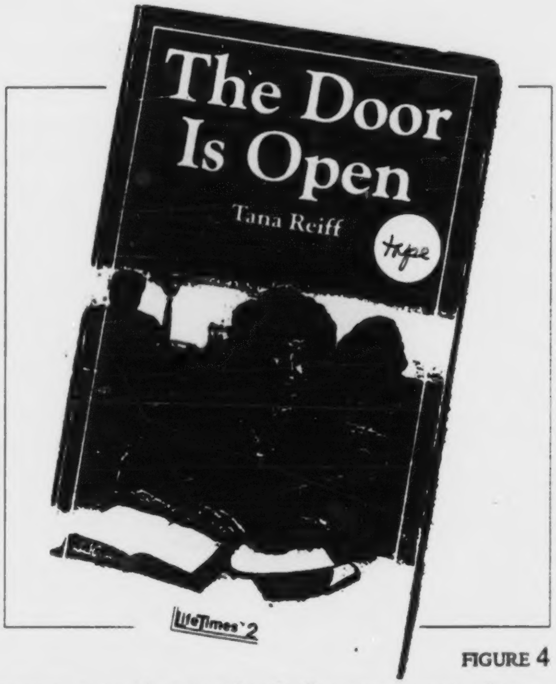


FIGURE 4

Be sure to let the reader know what this testing is for and how it will work. Explain that the reading sample will be hard for some people, and easy for others, and that it is only a small part of assessing their reading skills. Introduce the sample to the learner by showing her/him the book, telling her/him the title, looking at the cover together, and previewing the piece s/he will be reading. (See appendix 5 "Something We're Working On" for using learner-generated materials for reading assessment.)

g. Slosson Oral Reading Test. For learners who were able to read the sample for the comprehension exercise with some fluency, the next step is the Slosson Oral Reading Test. (figure 5, appendix 6)

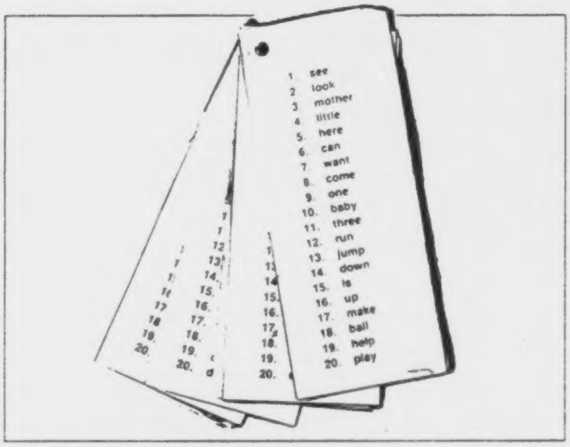


FIGURE 5

The interviewer explains the test; that it isn't always easy to read isolated words on a list, the test isn't perfect, but it's another part of the picture of what skills someone has for reading. The word lists are given to the learner one at a time and s/he is asked to read the words s/he knows out loud. The interviewer marks each word on a separate sheet, using a plus (+) for correct words and minus (-) for incorrect words. When a learner makes seven miscues on any one list, the testing stops. (Complete scoring instructions are on the test forms, appendix 6.) After the stopping point, the interviewer often comments on the skills the reader showed, such as knowing the beginning consonant sounds.

The results, for the purpose of screening and placing learners in our program, are useful but limited. The Slosson yields a grade level equivalent, which has been important for some funding sources. It also gives a limited picture of learners' decoding, pronunciation, and sight word recognition skills. The greatest value of using this test for us is that the "grade level" number is often an accurate gauge of the level of material a learner will be able to read independently. We find that learners who start below the "2.0" level as reflected on the Slosson pre-test and go on to make a great deal of progress in connected reading, add to their sight word vocabulary and word recognition skills, and begin to see themselves as readers and writers, do not necessarily have that progress reflected in a Slosson post-test. The Slosson is best used as a placement test and not to measure significant growth and progress. However, when we have used it as a post-test for funding sources, we have included other documentation of reading development for all learners, but especially for the lower level readers whose growth hardly shows on the test.

h. Letter Identification: For a learner who is not able to read any of the words on the first list of the Slosson, or who has indicated s/he cannot read or write at all, the interviewer may ask if s/he knows some of the letters of the alphabet. A letter chart is used to have the learner point out the ones s/he knows. Some learners will report seeing things backwards or having been told they are dyslexic. A letter chart might be used to find out which letters, if any, learners reverse. If this is a severe problem, consultation is sought with a learning disabilities specialist for further assessment.

LETTER CHART

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N
O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

i. Writing Sample: The last part of the Screening/Placement process is to ask the potential student to try to write something. This is often not the learner's favorite part. The interview discusses the fact that writing is hard and that spelling is a part of writing that everyone finds difficult. The learner is encouraged to try it, and not to worry about their handwriting or spelling. A suggestion is made that they might want to write about their goals for themselves in connection with reading and writing, be-

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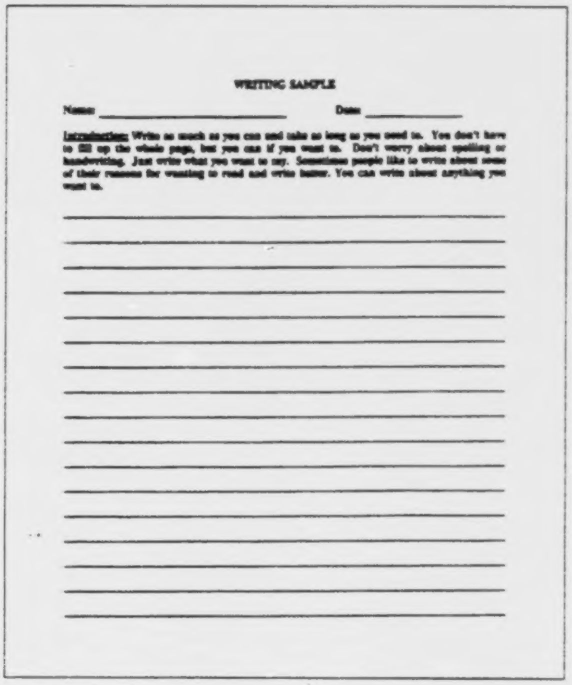
cause it's probably on their minds; but anything they choose to write about is fine. They are seated at a table, given a lined sheet and a pencil with an eraser, and encouraged to write as much or as little as they want, and to do the best they can. (figure 6, appendix 7) The interviewer usually walks away to do something else while the learner writes for as long as s/he wants. Most learners who can, do write. Those who have not been able to write their names are not asked to do this by themselves. They may be asked if they would like to dictate something about their goals and then have it read back to them as a sample of the way they will be learning to read in class. Learners who write something independently are encouraged to read it to the interviewer and are given positive feedback on their courage and skills. Often the interviewer focuses on the content of the writing in making positive comments. The writing sample helps to assess what skills a learner will bring to writing as well as give us an idea of a learner's understanding of the writing process. It's often an opportunity to surprise and please the writer by being able to read what they write and giving them support for writing it. It is also helpful in documenting a learner's progress. In part, we like to have a writing exercise in the intitial screening as an introduction to what will be happening in class each day: writing will be part of it.



WRITING SAMPLE

Name: ____________________ Date: __________

Introduction: Write as much as you can and take as long as you need to. You don't have to fill up the whole page, but you can if you want to. Don't worry about spelling or handwriting. Just write what you want to say. Sometimes people like to write about some of their reasons for wanting to read and write better. You can write about anything you want to.

FIGURE 6

j. Closure: If a decision can be made on the spot, it is. If not, a clear message is given to the learner as to when a decision will be made. Learners who are appropriate for the program are invited to join a class and if they accept, a card with the time and date of their first class and the telephone number of the program is given to them. Transportation and other concerns are dealt with at this time. Learners are told they need to call if they are unable to come to class. If they wish to borrow a book before class starts, they can sign one out. Learners who are not appropriate for the program are told why and given a list of resources that might better meet their needs. Often these learners are identified before the end of the interview and not made to complete it.

EARLY ASSESSMENT

Read/Write/Now Goals List[3]

Using a goals checklist enables us to help learners identify their interests and name their particular goals, a crucial step towards self-directed learning. (figure 7, appendix 8) Learner's responses to the checklist are used to articulate goals and the steps to reach them. The goals, in turn, are put translated into action plans through short-term learning contracts. It is also a tool for curriculum development, since our curriculum is based in part on the identified needs and interests of participants in the program. The common interests that are identified by the goals lists, such as driver's education, voting information,

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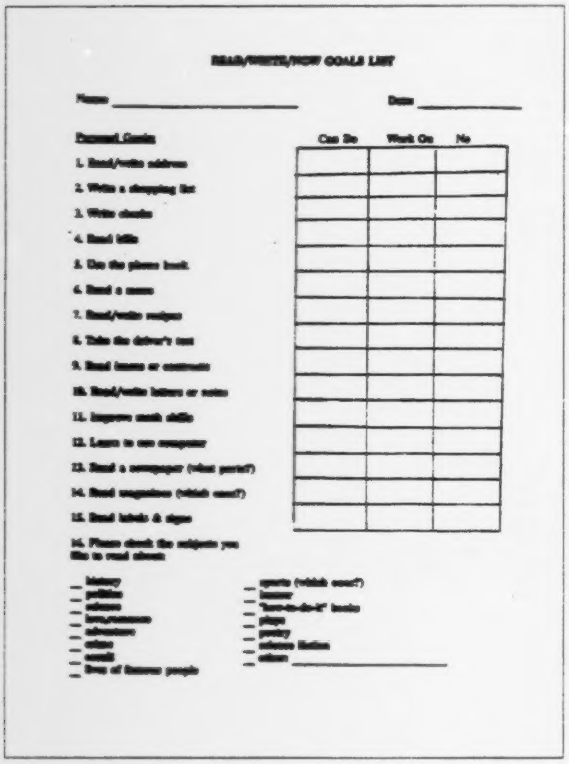

FIGURE 7

or using a checking account, can often be developed into an extended small group learning activity.

We have used the goals list in a variety of ways. It is always part of the activities early in the class cycle. We usually have a group lesson/discussion on goal setting.[4] We have also used readings from learner-written publications or oral histories which touch on educational experiences and life experiences that many learners can identify with as a starting place for analysis and discussion about where we have been, where we want to go, and how we can get there.

We have introduced the goals list to the whole group, and also to small groups facilitated by teachers and tutors. The group goes through each section of the checklist as learners check off their own responses. The teacher is available to help as needed. In some cases the facilitator also reads and writes the learner's responses on the form. We hesitated about doing the checklists in groups because it seemed like a potentially revealing situation that might make some learners uncomfortable. However, it turned out to be another opportunity for learners to offer each other support and comfort as they shared some of their problems and hopes around reading and writing. Sharing their responses was a spontaneous occurrence, not orchestrated by teachers, and those few learners who felt uncomfortable in doing so were able to just write their answers, ask for assistance from the teacher if needed, and hand over the finished checklist. Obviously, goals checklists can also be done on an individual basis, with a teacher or tutor assisting as needed while one learner goes through the items and marks her/his responses.

Burke Reading Interview - Modified[5]

What? An interview that explores the learner's understanding of what reading is and what a good reader does.

Why? To help teacher and learner understand what ideas about reading a learner is starting with; to aid in planning reading activities and discussions designed to explore the reading process and metacognative aspects of reading development.

How? Usually done individually, with teacher acting as interviewer and scribe; can be adapted to a group activity.

When? Early in class cycle; can be repeated at end of cycle–comparison of responses can be interesting for learner to reflect on. (appendix 9)

Looking at Your Own Reading Behavior

What? Self-assessment questionnaire for learners

Why? To help learners become more aware of their

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own reading behavior as part of the process of setting own goals for reading and becoming more self-directed learners

How? Individually answered after group discussion & clarification of questions

When? After 2 - 3 weeks of classes in a cycle; can be repeated at end of cycle for purposes of comparing responses to assess growth. (appendix 10)

Reading Progress Checklist

What? Teacher's short checklist for assessment of individual learner's reading behavior and development over period of class cycle

Why? To organize and categorize reading assessment information in an accessible format to help teachers plan strategy lessons and activities for individuals and reading groups

How? Teacher considers learner's reading behavior in class, reading conferences, miscue analysis, learner's self-assessment and responses to modified Burke interview and completes checklist

When? After the learner has been in classes for about three week and after above assessments are done; repeat at end of the cycle to assess changes. (appendix 11)

Writing Progress Checklist[6]

What? Checklist form to assess various aspects of writing development, both in terms of writing skills and self-concept as a writer

Why? To provide a coherent, comprehensive picture of a writer's progress for the learner and for teachers to assess individual and group needs for mini-lessons

How? Can be used by teacher after looking at a writer's dialogue journal and writing folder and shared with learner afterwards, or filled out with the learner, looking over the learner's writing together

When? After a few weeks in classes, or when the learner has been writing for three to four weeks; repeat and compare results at end the of the cycle. (appendix 12)

Miscue Analysis

At the core of whole language reading assessment is the Reading Miscue Inventory, (appendix 13) developed by Goodman, Burke, and Watson and adapted by practitioners in many settings. Miscue analysis looks at the effectiveness of a reader's use of strategies and cues in making sense of text. Inefficient use of language cues and strategies interferes with reading comprehension, which is the heart of the reading process. The purpose of miscue analysis is to discover the reader's strengths in using various reading strategies to make sense of texts and to assess which strategies the reader needs to develop and strengthen to improve his/her fluency and reading comprehension. The results of miscue analysis can be used by teachers to plan strategy lessons and reading activities which address the particular needs of readers. Results can also be reviewed with students to help them understand their own miscues strategies. Generally, miscue analysis is done at times when it is useful to assess the strengths and strategies a learner has and address the areas that are not yet developed. We try to do this early in a cycle of classes so that the information we get from it can be put to use in planning reading strategy lessons for learners. Subsequent miscue analyses can be used to evaluate growth in developing certain reading strategies by comparing them to earlier miscues and making a learning plan based on that information. Miscue analysis is only effective with readers who can independently read connected texts that are approximately 500 words long. The text can be written at a basic level, but there needs to be enough text for the reader to read for about 15 minutes and potentially make 25 or more miscues. (See next article, "Down and Dirty" Miscue Analysis for procedures.)

Learning Contracts: Encouraging Ownership of the Learning Process

At Read/Write/Now, we have been experimenting with using learning contracts for several years. (figure 9, appendix 14) One of the great benefits we have found in using them with adult learners is that they help learners to feel more directed and focused on their goals, and therefore to have more success in meeting them. The contract can organize and articulate a learning plan that may be happening anyway, but it is clarified and supported by writing it down. Learning contracts help teachers, too, in the sense that they help us to be aware of individual interests and needs of learners in the process of negotiating and monitoring the contracts. Another positive effect of learning contracts is an increased sense of ownership that many learners develop about the process of their own education. It is impossible to see education as the passive receiving of information from others when, as a learner, you have written down a plan of action for meeting your own goals in reading and writing and the plan involves you doing things, not just listening while a teacher tells you about doing things.

Learners are encouraged to name goals for themselves to work on in class and outside of class. We usually do a whole group brainstorm to come up with a list of what kinds of reading, writing, or math activities people can do when they're not in class. The most creative ideas have often come from learners who are already doing a lot of reading or writing on their own, at home, at work, anywhere and everywhere. Quite a few of our students have taken copies of their learning contracts home with them to put them up on the refrigerator to remind themselves of what they decided to do. The learning contract is an agreement between a learner and a teacher, and also between a learner and her/himself. The learner and teacher together decide on some personal goals for reading, writing, and other goals. Two questions are answered about each goal: What do you want to do? How do you want to do it?

The learning contract period is usually about eight weeks. A short Learning Contract Review conference is set up at the end of the eight week period to discuss how the learner and teacher think the contract went - were the goals met? Why or why not? Are there some better ways to try to meet the goals that weren't meant? Does the learner want to continue with the same goals or change some or all of them? At that point a new contract is written up or notations are made on the standing one to indicate that it is still in effect. Our experience has been that, for most learners, each successive contract period seems to make it easier for learners and teachers to fine-tune the process of naming reachable goals and reasonable steps to meeting them. The first contract conference is always the hardest in terms of making it a process that is really owned by the learner. Learners' ownership of their own learning seems to develop over time with the experience of setting and meeting goals: The more ownership learners feel over their own education, the more success they seem to have in meeting learning goals, and the more success they have in meeting goals, the more ownership they feel for their own learning.

Goal Setting and Learning Contracts

The steps outlined below typically take place after a learner has been in the program for three to four weeks and has had time to get comfortable in the group, get used to the way the program works, and identify some goals, likes and dislikes. Subsequent Learning Contract Review Conferences do not require quite as much preparation time on the part of the teacher.

A. Before Meeting with the Learner:

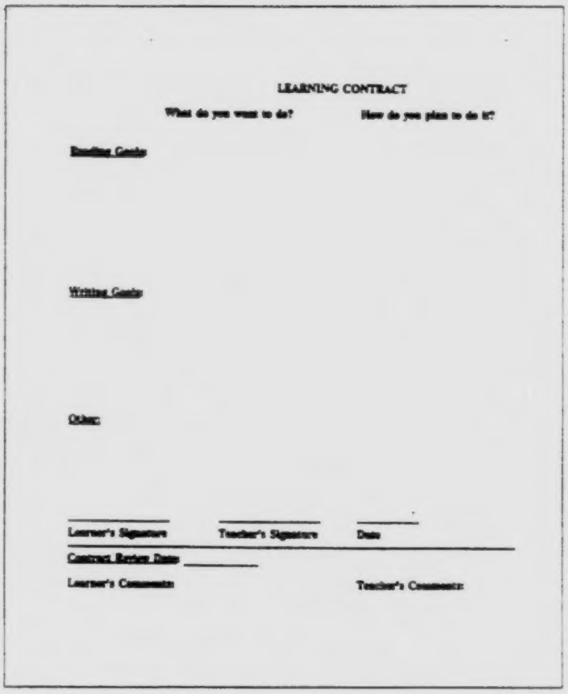
1. Review learner's Initial Screening & Placement Interview, including first writing sample and answers to interview questions relating to goals.

2. Review learner's Goals Checklist for interests, specific goals named by student.

3. Writing Assessment: Review dialogue journal and writing folder, using Writing Progress Checklist to help categorize progress; add categories as needed.

4. Reading Assessment: Teacher's observations of learner's reading behavior and development, together with these three tools:

a. Miscue Analysis: do one or review the latest one done to see where learner's strengths are and which strategies need to be developed further.



LEARNING CONTRACT

	What do you want to do?	How do you plan to do it?
Reading Goals:		
Writing Goals:		
Other:		

Learner's Signature

Teacher's Signature

Date

Contract Review Date: ________

Learner's Comments:

Teacher's Comments:

FIGURE 9

b. Looking at Your Own Reading Behavior: look over learner's responses and write a few notes to yourself as to any reading goals students may have stated or implied in their answers.

c. Burke Reading Interview (Modified): for teacher's use in understanding how a learner views the reading process, which may help in planning activities for that person or the reading group.

d. Reading Progress Checklist: for teacher's use in assessing individual reader's progress as observed in reading groups and individual conferences.

B. Orientation to learning contracts is done as a group activity before conferences begin.

C. Individual Conferences:

1. Materials needed: Learner's assessment portfolio, learning contract form.

2. Procedure:

a. Review purpose of conference & contract, briefly.

b. Explain timeframe (about eight weeks) for contract and need to choose short-term goals that can be accomplished in that time.

c. Learners may have several reading and writing goals, some for in class and some for outside of class.

D. Choosing Goals:

Learning about helping learners to choose goals and trying to empower them as decision-makers in their own learning has been an evolutionary process since we first began using goals checklists and learning contracts several years ago. We have gone from a stance of very limited interference and influence in the process of learners' decision-making about their educational goals to the role of full

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participants in a learning community. Full participation means listening to each other, sharing our opinions, knowledge, and advice in the process of negotiating the decisions that we often make together. Setting goals as individual learners and deciding what our goals as a group are going to be are negotiated decisions. Teachers and learners both have a voice in the way it all turns out. If we did not negotiate over these decisions, there would be a greater rate of frustration among both learners and teachers. If, for instance, a learner who could only read a few words decided he was going to get his driver's license within the contract period of 8 weeks and the teacher meeting with him simply said that sounded like a fine goal, without considering what kinds of materials were available and how much time it would take the learner to have enough understanding of the material covered in the test to take the oral exam, chances are the learner would not meet his goal and the teacher would not feel like she had done her best to help him meet it. What we have learned about goal setting is that both the learner and the teacher need to have input into the process. Goals are made to be reached, so the more realistic we can be, the better all concerned feel about the process. But it is a delicate balance - longer term goals and aspirations need to be nourished. All of us need far off goals to aim for, and all great accomplishments start one step at a time. As teachers, we try to help learners figure out what steps they can start now to get to where they want to go, whether they arrive next week or next year.

1. Start with what the learner names as goals for her/himself. If they have no ideas, suggest goals based on their responses to one of the self-assessment tools.

2. Reading Goals: Make goals as specific as possible. If the learner has a general goal such as "reading better", but has no ideas as to how to do this, suggest a goal based on what you know about their reading based on the Miscue analysis, participation in groups, and individual conferences. "Read better" might translate into working on a specific reading strategy like using prediction and contextual cues to make sense of what they read. "Reading more" might translate into choosing a book to read at home and making a commitment to turn off the TV for 30 minutes a night to have the quiet to read it.

3. Writing Goals: Make these goals as specific as possible, too. Ask the writer to think about what's good about their writing, what they like about it. Tell them about some positive aspects of their writing that you have noticed - content and process, as well as mechanics. Ask the writer to tell you some things they would like to do better in writing. If "spell better" is a goal, help the learner come up with specific ways they can work on their spelling and make that one of the goals. Try to make some of the writing goals process or content oriented and some of them skills oriented.

4. Other Goals: These may be interests indicated on the Goals Checklist or they may be related to meeting the learner's immediate needs, or steps to meeting longer term goals, such as getting a driver's license. In class and outside work could be part of the plan. Goals may also come out of work in options chosen by learners over eight week period, such as math, computers, or helping kids with homework.

Notes

1 All of the materials included in this article, as well as other curriuculum materials, can also be found in the ABE 0-4 (grade level) Curriculum Kit sponsored by SABES.

2 There are many possibilities for teacher-made assessment exercises. This is only one example of an exercise that has been part of our quick, to the point, but necessarily superficial assessment of potential learners' ability to read and understand a piece of

connected text. It helps us to place a learner in a very large ballpark, certainly not to pinpoint exactly where s/he is sitting or exactly which reading strategies s/he has strengths and weaknesses in.

3 Read/Write/Now is grateful to the Adult Literacy Evaluation Project, at the Center for Literacy in Philadelphia, the source of the original goals checklist that we used, adapted and are continually revising to fit the needs of the learners.

4 See *Many Literacies: Modules for Training Adult Beginning Readers and Tutors*, "Life Goals: Maria's Story," for an example of a group activity for setting goals.

5 Original interview developed by C. Burke (1987).

6 Adapted and expanded from Sylvia Greene's "Writing and Spelling Progress Sheet" from the *Basic Literacy Kit* (1989).

"Down and Dirty" Miscue Analysis

by Lindy Whiton

Introduction

Whole language is based on the theory that readers predict, interact, and confirm while they are reading. They use letter-sound, syntax, and semantic (meaning) cues to make those predictions in order to understand what they are reading. The miscue analysis measures their ability to use these cue systems and strategies. This information allows the instructor to develop strategy lessons appropriate for the individual reader.

For example, a reader may score 85 percent acceptability for letter-sound cues and 20 percent grammatical acceptability. The same reader may be good at using letter-sound cues to predict, but not good at using meaning cues. This reader leaves nonsense words in the passage or substitutes one word for another even though it makes no sense and obscure the meaning of the passage. This reader might be given strategy lessons that would strengthen her/his usage of syntax cues, as well as ones that would strengthen semantic strategies.

Be aware that the miscue analysis is not a skills test. It evaluates the efficiency of the strategies that a reader uses and it indicates where help is needed. With that in mind, the following notes outline how to do a miscue analysis:

Materials

1. A complete text--one that is slightly challenging to the reader and takes approximately 15 minutes to read
2. A copy of the text that you can mark on
3. A tape recorder and tape
4. Miscue analysis form (see copy of form by B. Sherman & J. DeLawter, c. 1977, appendix 13)

Procedure

Make sure the tape recorder is working. Start the tape. First, have the reader read the entire text. Keep your comments supportive, but do not supply words; suggest that s/he "go on," or "skip it." After s/he has finished reading, ask for a retelling. Do not give any prompts. When the reader finishes retelling the story, you can then ask direct questions, such as, Who were the characters? How would you describe that character? What do you think the author was trying to tell us? Finally, turn off the tape, thank the reader and tell her/him s/he may go.

Now listen to the tape, marking each miscue as you go. Number them. For this "down and dirty" miscue analysis, stop marking at miscue number 25. (In a full miscue analysis, you would mark them all.) However, listen to the entire tape once to get an idea of the reader's dialect, repeated miscues, and to see how many non-word miscues appear.*

The miscues to be marked are:

1) If the reader guesses phonetically and there is no such word, write the phonetic representation above the word.
2) If a word is replaced, write in the replacement.

3) If the word is omitted, circle it.
4) If a word is inserted, put a caret in the place where it was inserted.
5) If the miscue is corrected by the reader, underline the miscue and draw a line in front of it, placing a circled "C" above it.

Once you have marked the text, you are now ready to fill in the miscue analysis form. Look at each miscue individually for high or low letter-sound relationship, then grammatical acceptability and whether or not the miscue changes the meaning of the sentence (sections II-IV). If there is no meaning change, then the miscue is automatically a strong miscue and gets marked within the pattern section (V) as "strength". If there is a complete change in meaning, it is automatically a weak miscue and gets marked as such. If there is an attempt to correct the miscue and it is grammatically acceptable, there is "some strength" to the miscue and it should be marked as such.

Determine the percentages for each grouping. What you are looking at is the efficiency with which the reader uses each cue system.

Now listen to the retelling. For each element of the retelling (eg., character identification), the reader can receive a given number of points (section VI). Use your judgement. How many characters were identified? How accurate was the description of each character? How many of the events of the story did the reader recall? Did the reader remember the order of events? Did the reader understand the plot? Did s/he know what the message or moral was? And finally, did s/he bring her/his own experience into the retelling? Add up the points.

Section VII is important too. Repeated miscues, such as quotation marks, or -ing or -ed endings, may indicate a particular problem. Completing the bar graph summary (VIII) will tell you where the reader's strengths and weaknesses are. For example, if the reader gets an 85 percent for sound-letter relationships and a 10 percent for meaning, then the reader may need to learn that the passage must make sense. This reader may also not know that s/he can correct miscues.

By reading the graph and understanding the patterns, individual reading strategy lessons can be developed for that individual reader's needs. For further help in looking at Miscue Analysis, *The Whole Language Evaluation Book*, by Goodman, Goodman & Hood (Heinemann) is helpful. For help in developing strategy lessons please refer to *Whole Language Strategies for Secondary Students*, edited by Gilles, Bixby, Crowley, Crenshaw, Henrichs, Reynolds & Pyle. (Richard C. Owens).

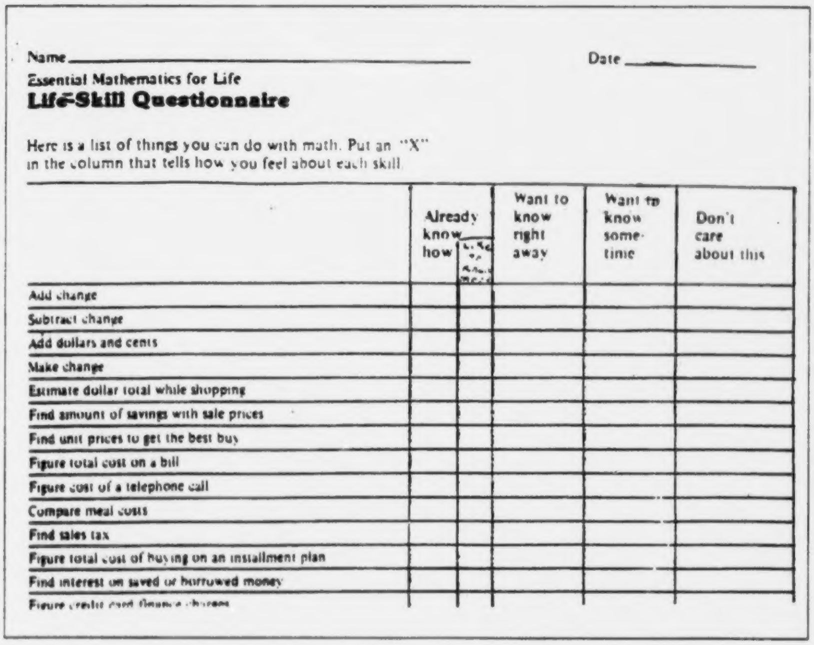
Note

* Non-word miscues: this one is especially tale telling, for it indicates that the only real strategy the reader is using is a letter-sound strategy and that other strategies need to be developed.

The Education Goals Assessment Packet

by Martha Germanowski

The Step-by-Step Adult Learner Program in Amesbury and Haverhill Massachusetts is a grant-funded program for homeless adults. The learners, men and women age 16-65, range in skills from new readers to high school graduates. They come to the program primarily from two local transitional housing programs: Link House, a live-in program for men with a history of substance abuse, and Transitional Housing for Women, a battered women's shelter.



Name __________ Date __________

Essential Mathematics for Life

Life-Skill Questionnaire

Here is a list of things you can do with math. Put an "X" in the column that tells how you feel about each skill.

	Already know how	[illegible]	Want to know right away	Want to know sometime	Don't care about this
Add change					
Subtract change					
Add dollars and cents					
Make change					
Estimate dollar total while shopping					
Find amount of savings with sale prices					
Find unit prices to get the best buy					
Figure total cost on a bill					
Figure cost of a telephone call					
Compare meal costs					
Find sales tax					
Figure total cost of buying on an installment plan					
Find interest on saved or borrowed money					
Figure credit card finance charges					

FIGURE 1

Identifying the Need

In late 1990, after six months of teaching Step-by-Step classes, I identified three needs to address in order to make my work more effective: 1) I needed a more systematic way to learn about the interests and goals of my adult learners; 2) I needed to develop individualized education plans (IEPs) for each student; and 3) I needed an efficient way to record the on-going progress of each student. I was not content with our program's brief interview and standardized testing as the source from which to design class materials and evaluate progress. Those methods were convenient but severely limited. I wanted a model that measured progress in a way that both teacher and student would understand and find relevant.

Devloping the Packet

Through a series of workshops on evaluation and assessment sponsored by SABES, I began to investigate various intake and assessment models used in other Massachusetts adult basic education programs (in particular the goals list developed at the Read/Write/Now program and published in

Marilyn Gillespie's book, *Many Literacies: Modules for Training Beginning Readers and Tutors*[1]). Then, using information provided at Step-by-Step intake interviews, I compiled a list of students' interests and goals. This list included, "getting my GED," "passing a learner's permit test," "reading to my children," "using cooking meausres," and "filling out a job application." To this list I added the types of materials that had been used and requested by learners over the first six months of my class. English, math and life skills tasks from multi-level ABE workbooks such as *Essential Math for Life* (Contemporary Books), *Let's Work It Out: Topics for Parents* (New Readers Press), *Master Your Money* (Janus Books), and *Life Skills Reading* (Scott Foresman and Co.) were combined with the original list. Eventually this list was to be integrated with two other models and modified to fit our program's particular needs.

Learner Input

Before devising the final goals list for classroom use, two groups of about five learners each, were given the "Goals List" from *Many Literacies* and the "Life Skills Questionnaire" from *Essential Mathematics for Life* (Scott Foresman and Co.) with one modification: the column heading "like to know more" was added. (figure 1) Students were asked to report their feelings about the checklists. They responded that both lists had interesting items and things they had not thought of. Some learners felt that the "Life Skills Questionnaire" was too long, while others liked the variety. Most felt that the "Goals List" explanation was unclear, but, all agreed that the print was easier to read on the "Goals List" than on the "Life-Skills Questionnaire."

Midway through this investigation with learners, I applied to SABES for a mini-grant to continue this assessment work in greater detail.

A review of by Step-by-Step teachers of the information lead to the conclusion that a checklist could create more diverse and complete responses than a traditional intake form. The teachers believed that several factors should be carefully attended to when designing the checklist: Variety, clarity and format are important to create interest and involvement in the survey and to assure that learners understand the form it. Checklists should include a means of acknowledging improvement, advancement or completion. Students should be given options to identify and choose academic goals as well as life skills. Language in the checklist should affirm adult learners' prior knowledge, be sensitive to varying interest levels, and avoid negative attitudes.

Based on these conclusions, the decision was made to create a checklist of interest areas from all student and class input and from collected published material. The checklist would

- be printed clearly and spaced for easy reading;
- group goals according to interest areas and arrange them in order from the simplest to the most complex when applicable;
- list life skills and academic skills separately;
- provide a place for noting completions of tasks;
- record student goals;
- create a daily record of work toward goals started, work in progress and work completed;
- include academic skills (math, English, GED, etc.)
- be worded survey in a positive manner.[2]

A daily log was designed as a way to have a record of on-going progress. It included: goals for the day, subjects studied, learner comments and teacher commentsand a plan for the next time.

Our first Assessment Packet contained these elements:

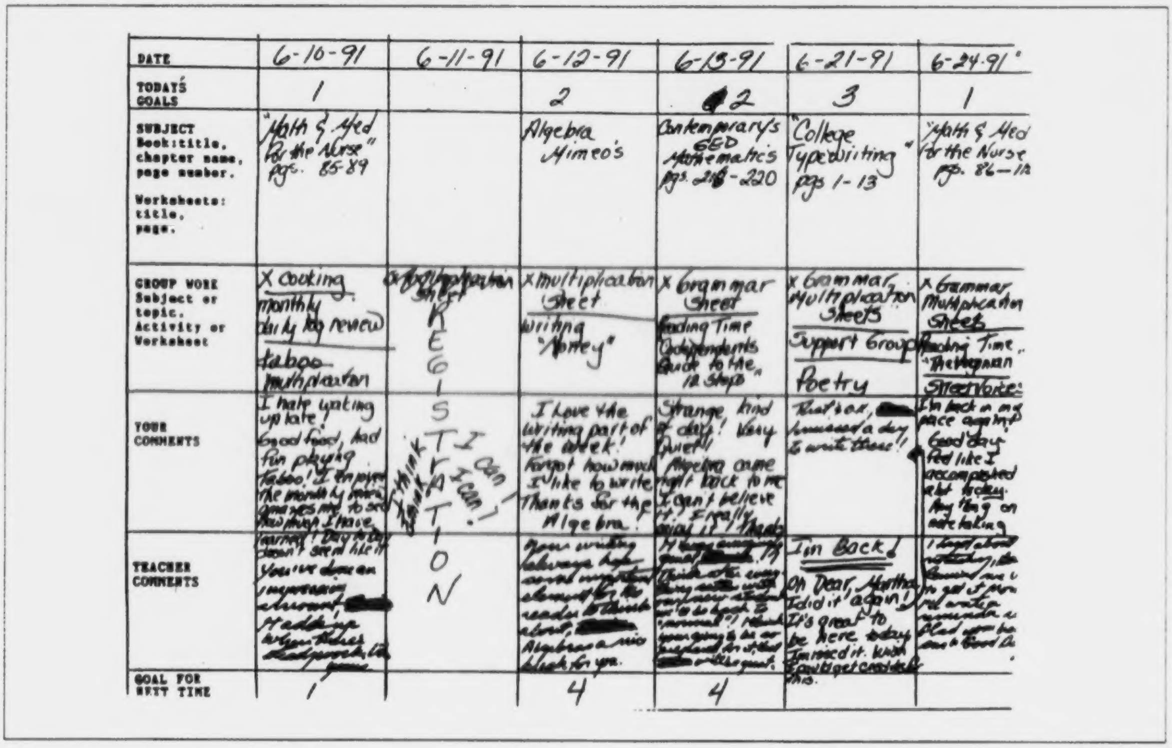
- a daily log (appendix 16));
- a list of education goals (appendix 17) with space to note the date each goal is achieved;
- a six page checklist (appendix 18);
- a signed contract as required by our agency.

This version of the Education Goals Assessment Packet was used in my classroom from January to March, 1991 and distributed at SABES staff development meetings throughout the state.

Revisions

In April a major revision was made. Classroom use had shown that students rarely went back to the checklist to mark completions even when reminded. So, the checklist was revised to say "Does this subject remind you of anything else that interests you?" in order to encourage more information at intake. The "date goals achieved" on the education goals sheet was dropped and a monthly review replaced it (appendix 19). Along with the daily log, the monthly review became an update on what had been learned for student and teacher to observe. The review included re-reading the checklist and goals list, reviewing goals, if desired, and listing advancements made in and out of class.

At present, no further changes to the Education



DATE	6-10-91	6-11-91	6-12-91	6-13-91	6-21-91	6-24-91
TODAY'S GOALS	1		2	2	3	1
SUBJECT Book: title, chapter name, page number. Worksheets: title, page.	"Math & Med for the Nurse" pgs. 85-89		Algebra Mimeo's	Contemporary's GED Mathematics pgs. 218-220	"College Typewriting" pgs 1-13	"Math & Med for the Nurse pg. 86-1[illegible]
GROUP WORK Subject or topic. Activity or Worksheet	X cooking monthly daily log review taboo multiplication	multiplication sheet REGISTRATION	X multiplication Sheet writing "Money"	X Grammar Sheet Reading Time Codependents Guide to the 12 Steps"	X Grammar, Multiplication Sheets Support Group Poetry	X Grammar Multiplication Sheets Reading Time "The Virginian" Street Voices
YOUR COMMENTS	I hate getting up late! Good food, had fun playing taboo! I enjoyed the monthly review, amazes me to see how much I have learned! Day to day doesn't seem like it.	I think I can I can! I can!	I love the writing part of the week! Forgot how much I like to write. Thanks for the Algebra!	Strange kind of day! Very quiet! Algebra came right back to me. I can't believe it. Finally [illegible]	That's ok, [redacted] [illegible] a day to write these!!	I'm back in my place again! Good day. Feel like I accomplished a lot today. Anything on note taking
TEACHER COMMENTS	You've done an impressive amount [redacted] of reading [illegible]		Your writing [illegible] always has [illegible] [redacted] Algebra a nice block for you.	[redacted] [illegible]	I'm Back! Oh Dear, Martha I did it again! It's great to be here today. I missed it. Wish I could get credit for this.	[illegible]
GOAL FOR NEXT TIME	1		4	4		

FIGURE 2

Goals Assessment Packet have been made. However, specific academic checklists for GED Math have been added for students who are doing that preparation (appendix 20). Writing and English language checklists are being developed.

Results

Before I began using the Education Goals Assessment Packet, I had to depend on time consuming record keeping of students' work and progress, and intake forms and brief conversations as the only means of appraising students' interests and goals. In addition, students were minimally involved in planning and goal-setting.

Now that the Packet is in use, many changes have occurred in the classroom. The most immediate change is that, with learners keeping their own record, there is much more time for me to give individual attention. Through the Assessment Packet, students have a more complete picture of their classwork and progress. After discussing their choices with the teachers, students can now write their own goals whichbecome the basis for their individualized education plans. These choices give students options, increasing the likelihood that theirs will be a positive learning experience. The daily log is a continual reminder of progress made over short and long periods. It has become a record for group work as well as class development (figure 2). It is also a document of our curriculum in process, a "retroactive syllabus."

The Education Goals Assessment Packet has been distributed to the Massachusetts Homeless Education Network, Literacy Volunteers of Massachusetts tutors, and presented to adult educators from Massachusetts at SABES meetings and at the Literacy Volunteers of Massachusetts Annual Conference.

Some programs have modified it to fit their learners' capabilities. Other programs have used it as is. Overall, the Packet has been an empowering tool for learners as well as teachers. It stimulates adult learners to recognize past achievements and present possibilities. The daily log is a simple visual record of learner progress that the student, teacher or tutor can easily understand.

Reference/Note

1 Gillespie, Marilyn, *Many Literacies: Modules for Training Adult Beginning Readers and Tutors* (Amherst: Center for International Educaiton, 1990)

2 They were first changed to say, "I know this, I know some of this, I would like to know more now/later, not interested now." But, before being distributed, the heading were changed to say; "I know/do this, I would like to know more now/later, I understand this and I am ready for the next step."

Alternative Assessment: An Annotated Bibliography (excerpt)

complied by Don Robishaw

From the Foreword

Today many adult educators are concerned about mandates from federal, state and local funding sources that call for standardized testing of adults in literacy programs. The various books, dissertations, research reports and articles annotated in this bibliography represent a sample of case studies, descriptions of alternative approaches, tools, opinions and arguments in defense of alternative assessment procedures that better serve the needs of adult learners.

Traditional standardized quantitative approaches to assessment in adult literacy have been deemed inadequate by many in the adult literacy field. Standardized tests often close off or lock students out of opportunities to learn. The following arguments have been used in defense of adult educators who believe that alternative procedures need to be developed to better serve adult learners:

1. Tests designed for children should not be used with adults.
2. Standardized tests do not measure how adults use their new skills in real life experiences.
3. Elementary school grade levels, as a form of measurement are actually degrading to adults.
4. Adults are intimidated by testing experiences.
5. Tests remind adults of their past failures.
6. Assessment should be participatory.
7. Assessment tools should be designed to assist the adult learners in improving their new skills and to help teachers set up structures for improved learning.

Non-traditional, holistic, learner centered or alternative approaches to assessment contribute to making education a different and more positive experience for adults than the negative experience most adults in ABE programs remember as kids. The movement towards non standardized assessment is a major step in the right direction for adult education.

Alternative approaches introduce procedures that enable adult literacy students to evaluate their own experience and progress. These approaches also help students view their own learning process in reading and writing. They also help teachers identify the strategies students use and how these strategies change as they progress as learners.

The main issue for alternative approaches is to make the assessment process participatory. Creative tools are being designed to assist adult learners to assess themselves as they improve their skills and to help adult educators set up structures for improving learning opportunities. These new and innovative approaches to assessment are designed to be an ongoing part of curriculum. They inform the development of a curriculum which is based on the learners evolving progress. In this way they are more useful to students and teachers than traditional assessments at the completion of a course.

Alternative assessment instruments and methods are used by adult educators to collect information about student knowledge, skills and interests to design a learner-centered curriculum. It is the opinion of many of these authors that assessment should be on-going and designed to be part of the curriculum, not something separate or added on. They combine these tools and methods to assist the learner in progressing in adult literacy programs. Examples of some of these tools and methods include:

- Learner goals checklists
- Writing progress checklists
- Reading progress checklists
- Learner's writing folders
- Learner's journals
- Learning contracts
- Notes teachers make during conferences
- Learning logs
- Anecdotes
- Record keeping devices

To support and enrich teachers' endeavors, the Research and Design unit of SABES has compiled this first edition of an annotated bibliography on alternative assessment approaches in adult literacy. This bibliography is intended to be a resource to teachers who are interested in learning more about the topic as well as those interested in using the various procedures described in these articles in their classrooms.

Sample Annotations

022 ALBSU (1990). "Progress Profile." Nottingham, England: Center for Research into Education of Adults.

Assessment **Adult Literacy** **Student centered**

This student evaluation profile was developed by ALBSU as a model to illicit and maintain student progress in adult literacy programs. As a framework for student assessment in adult literacy it reflects a student-centered approach.

The progress profile initially tries to get at student goals by asking the question "Where do I want to go?" Students decide on short term learning goals to work on. these are goals that progress can be made on during a maximum of forty hours of work. From this point students and tutors are expected to continue on with the following questions in order to complete the cycle and then to start the cycle over again with the first question or to continue working on the students present concern until they feel confident about their new learning. the remaining four questions are:

2. What do I need to learn?
3. How am I going to get there?
4. How far have I got?
5. Where to next?

023 Wolf, M. (1988). "Towards a Model of Alternative Assessment: A Progress Report." Bronx, NY: Institute for Literacy Studies, Lehman College.

Action research **Teacher/Learner participation**

This short term participatory research project is a case study of an experiment involving teachers and learners from an adult literacy program working together to develop assessment tools for new students. The project was initiated because of the teachers' expressed need for better ways to assess the reading and writing abilities of adult students. The three components of the project were: 1) the selection of a research team including both teachers and learners; 2) a seminar which met for five two-hour sessions; and 3) two sets of interviews of students by student/researchers.

The article might have been more helpful had details on both the seminars and the interview been included. Specifically, the lists of interview questions generated in the seminars as well as the ones finally chosen to be used should have been given.

021 Goodman, K.S., Goodman, Y. & Hood, W.J. (1989). *The Whole Language Evaluation Book.* Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann.

Whole Language **Evaluation** **Curriculum**

This book contains a chapter which centers on evaluation in the whole language classroom. Goodman maintains that evaluation is part of the curriculum and, therefore is integral to the teaching/learning process. She underscores the importance of building a professional sense about evaluation in language teaching, including knowing about language and learning and developing intuition about one's work. Goodman refers to the "double agenda" of evaluation: the teacher's evaluation and the student's learning and emphasizes that evaluation is an on-going process built into the everyday plans of the teacher. This chapter concludes with a discussion of observing, interacting, and analyzing skills and of the importance of self-evaluation as part of a teacher's professional development.

This book is a primer on whole language teaching, an introduction to the field for the uninitiated. As such, the well-experienced language teacher or the person well-versed in evaluation will find this chapter by Goodman rather shallow and uninspiring. It discusses evaluation in a cursory manner and fails to address many of the complex issues involved.

Notes

As with many works which assemble a collection of readings this bibliography is the result of the efforts of several people--from the development of the initial idea, to the search and collection of books and articles. I am indebted to the following people for their assistance in this project: Loren McGrail of World Education/SABES who supplied me with many of these resources and Joan Dixon, Literacy Support Initiative Coordinator. In addition the following people acted as reviewers: Janet Kelly, director of the Read/Write/Now program, Janet Isserlis of the International Institute of Rhode Island and the following U. Mass graduate students: Michele M. Sedor, Barbara Huff, Susan Schellenberger, Haleh Arbab, Keyvan Kabastioun, and Ed Graybill.

The complete annotated bibliography contains 51 entries and will be updated on an ongoing basis. Contributions to the collections are welcome. Each regional center has a collection of these articles. Please contact your Regional SABES Coordinator or Loren McGrail at World Education if you would like to annotate some of the collected articles or add new ones.

Appendices

To be able to **talk** with certain **people**.

- my landlord
- my child's teacher
- the boss
- my neighbors
- my social worker
- the doctor
- the police

Talk on the **telephone**

- about appointments
- about school
- about jobs

I want to be able to use a **telephone** directory.

I need to:

- Know alphabetical order
- Know likely headings
- Know the number for directory assistance

I want to be able to use a **dictionary**.

I need to:

- Know alphabetical order
- Know symbols and abreviations
- spelling

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Appendix 2

An overview of the assessment process and tools used in the Read/Write/Now Adult Learning Center

Initial Assessment (before learner enters program):
Initial Screening & Placement Interview,
with Slosson and teacher-made comprehension exercise

Early Assessment (first 3 weeks of class cycle):
Goals Checklist
Modified Burke Reading Interview
Looking at Your Own Reading Behavior
Miscue Analysis
Reading Progress Checklist
Writing Progress Checklist
Learning Contract

Ongoing Assessment (done regularly or as needed throughout cycle):
Miscue Analysis
Book List
Reading Conference Record
Teacher's Log
Learner's Log
Math Activities Record
Writing Conference Record
Review Writing folder, dialogue journal
Review and revise Learning Contract

Then & Now Assessment (using same tool again or new tool to review progress):*
Writing Progress Checklist
Reading Progress Checklist
Modified Burke Reading Interview
Looking At Your Own Reading Behavior
Slosson Post-test, if applicable
Learner's Self-Evaluation Questionnaire

* A final review of learner's assessment portfolio, which would include samples of writing, materials for initial and ongoing assessment, goals list, learning contracts, etc., would be part of a "then and now" assessment conference with learner at the end of a cycle.

READ/WRITE/NOW SCREENING & PLACEMENT INTERVIEW

Name: ______________________________**Interviewer:**________________**Date:**_______

1. What is your most important reason for wanting to learn to read and write better?

2. What are some things that you want to do that being able to read and write better will help you to do?

3. Do you have any children or grandchildren in your life? If so, are they school age? What are their ages and grades in school?

4. Do you have a job now? If so, what kind of work do you do? If not, what kinds of jobs have you had? Do you need to use reading and writing at work?

5. Do you do any reading on your own now? Do you read at home, in stores, at work, on the street? If so, what kinds of things do you read? (Examples: TV schedule, mail, newspapers, childrens' books, labels, street signs...)

6. Do you do any writing on your own now? If so, what kinds of things do you write? (Examples: signs name, forms, shopping lists, checks or money orders, letters and notes...)

7. Tell me something about your school years; where did you grow up? Did you go to school there? What was it like for you? What grade did you finish?

7a. (For non-native speakers of English and immigrants) What is your first language? When did you come to the U.S.? Did you have the chance to go to school in your native country? If so, how many years? Do you read and write your first language?

8. Have you ever been to classes for adult education before? If so, where and when? What was it like for you?

9. Have you ever used a computer before? How do you feel about learning something about using computers?

10. Some adults really want to come to class and improve their reading and writing, but find that things get in their way. Some of the things that come up are: problems with transportation, childcare, having to take care of other people in their families when they are

sick or need them, getting sick a lot, having problems with drugs or drinking, too much going on at home, working long hours... What kinds of things do you think might make it hard for you to come to study and get to class?

10a. What do you think you could do to make it easier for yourself to study and get to all of the classes?

10b. What can we do to make it easier for you to study and come to all of the classes? Examples: help figure out a bus route, find information on childcare providers, fill out forms...

11. We have a policy against drug and alcohol use by students and teachers, partly because we know that no one can learn or teach much when they are under the influence of either one. If you are invited to participate in learning at this center, do you agree that you will not come here under the influence of drugs or alcohol?

Signed: ______________________________

Signed: ______________________________

Appendix 4

READ/WRITE/NOW SILENT OR ORAL READING COMPREHENSION QUICK ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Reader:____________________________ **Staff:**_________________________ **Date:**________

(Write reader's responses or significant points of retelling on this sheet. Use other side if needed.)

Introduction: This is the first page from a book called, The Door is Open. It's about a woman who decided to go back to school as an adult after being away from it a long time. Her name is Lina. Take some time to try reading this to yourself silently. After you finish, we will talk about what you read.

* If the person being interviewed indicates that they can't read it silently but would like to try it orally, that's fine. If the reader needs help in getting through the oral reading, help as needed and make note of miscues made that change the meaning of the text and are not self-corrected. (Example: Text says: "She had wanted to return to school for many years." If reader miscues: "She had wanted to read the school for money yes", without self-correcting, make note of it on your copy of the text.) A reader like this may not know that reading makes sense, is relying too much on graphophonic cues and will need help developing other strategies.

After silent reading: How was that for you to read? Hard to read, just about right, or easy to read? What made it hard for you? (or just right, or easy)

After silent or oral reading: Ask the reader to tell you what they remember about the reading. If questions are needed to guide the retelling, use some or all of these questions:

1. What did Lina want to do for so many years?
2. How long had she been out of school?
3. How did she feel about going into the school for the first time?
4. This is not in the story, but I would like to know what you think: Why do you think Lina decided to go back to school after all those years?

COMMENTS:

Something We're Working On

Using learner-written pieces for reading assessment: There are many pieces of writing by other learners, such as those published in *Voices* magazine which can be used in a similar way to get both a sense of a learner's reading ability and to stimulate feelings of identification and solidarity with the writers' words they are reading. It can be a nice way to introduce a new student to a program where they will be seen as creators of culture, and not just consumers of it.

In using pieces from *Voices,* for instance, learners can be offered a choice among several pieces. They might choose one or more to read and talk over with the interviewer.

The pieces should be chosen for their natural language, potential interest and anticipated meaning for the reader, and varying levels of difficulty. Pieces from the First Words or New Words sections of the magazine are usually very accessible to basic and beginning readers. There may only be two or more sentences of connected text. Sentences are short, simple, and often have repeated phrases or patterns. See **"Hope" by Julia Williams** and **"Good Worker" by Jasper Bullock** for examples. You can include some more difficult pieces from the same section of the magazine. See **"Me First"** and **"Spending Time" by Mary Boyd** for examples of moderately more difficult pieces. By "moderately more difficult" I mean longer pieces that still use short sentences, natural language and contain fewer repetitive patterns. More difficult pieces such as **"A Fear That I Have" by Kelly Young** or **"To Past Teachers" by Hector Diaz**, use more multisyllabic words, idiomatic expressions and descriptive language that makes the pieces interesting to the reader and also more difficult.

The level of difficulty of the pieces used in this reading assessment activity can be assigned grade levels, if needed, by using a readability formula, such as the Frye formula, beforehand, and offering pieces of varying "grade levels". We have been thinking of using this approach for assessment of connected reading, using different samples for the pre- and post-tests. We think it will give us a more complete idea of a learner's ability to read and understand what they read and also reflect some of the growth our lower level learners make in reading that doesn't show up on the Slosson. It also seems like it would make a less alienating "testing" situation in that it uses materials written by other learners and it allows the learner to choose the readings, based on interest as well as whether they are accessible to them.

After silent reading one piece the learner selects, ask them to tell you about the piece. If the reader's retelling lacks details, ask some questions designed to help the reader recall, relate to, and interpret what they read. See copies of the pieces above and **Sample Questions** that could be used with them. Some of the sample questions are to help the reader recall and retell meaningful details of the pieces and others are meant to encourage the reader to interpret and respond to the content of the reading. If the reader can't remember what they read or didn't understand it well enough to talk about, you could offer to read it aloud and then discuss it together. If the reader wants to try another piece, encourage them to try one of the easier ones, and see how that goes. The reader can stop at after any piece that they want to.

The results of this informal assessment activity are likely to be: gaining some insight into the reader's ability to recall and respond to texts of various levels of difficulty. It may also help to determine what levels of text a reader can handle independently.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR READING ASSESSMENT USING STORIES FROM *VOICES*

Reading: "Good Worker" by Jasper Bullock

Questions:

1. What kind of work does the writer say he does? (for recall)
2. Does his picture tell you anything about what work he does? (for recall & interpretation)
3. Why do you think he says he is a good worker? (for interpretation)
4. What do you think makes a person a good worker? (for interpretation)

Reading: "Hope" by Julia Williams

Questions:

1. What does the writer hope to do? What else? (for recall)
2. Why did she call her story "Hope"? (for interpretation)
3. If you were to write a story about your hopes, what would it be like? (interpretation)

Reading: "Me First" by Mary Boyd

Questions:

1. Why do you think Mary Boyd called her piece "Me First" ? (for recall & interpretation)
2. What are some of the things she said she would like to spend money on if she had it? (for recall)
3. What do you think of the things she wanted to do? (for interpretation)
4. What would you do if you had a lot of money? (for interpretation)

Reading: "To Past Teachers" by Hector Diaz

Questions:

1. How did he feel about the teachers he had known in the past? (for recall)
2. What did he think of the way his teachers taught? (for recall)
3. Why did he get passed from grade to grade? (for recall & interpretation)
4. Did you ever have any teachers like the ones Hector writes about? (for interpretation)

Reading: "A Fear That I Have" by Kelly Young

Questions:

1. What is the writer afraid of? (for recall)
2. How did she cover up her problems with reading and writing? (for recall)
3. What happened with her son and the teddy bear that helped her make a change? (for recall & interpretation)
4. Why do you think she decided to get help with her reading and writing? (for interpretation)

"Keep a record from year to year" **SLOSSON ORAL READING TEST (SORT)**

READING LEVEL	
SCHOOL GRADE	

NAME________________________________ AGE________ DATE________________
LAST FIRST MIDDLE

SCHOOL________________________________

EXAMINER________________________________

	List P (20)	List 1 (40)	List 2 (60)
1.	see	with	game
2.	look	friends	hide
3.	mother	came	grass
4.	little	horse	across
5.	here	ride	around
6.	can	under	breakfast
7.	want	was	field
8.	come	what	large
9.	one	bump	better
10.	baby	live	suddenly
11.	three	very	happen
12.	run	puppy	farmer
13.	jump	dark	river
14.	down	first	lunch
15.	is	wish	sheep
16.	up	basket	hope
17.	make	food	forest
18.	ball	road	stars
19.	help	hill	heavy
20.	play	along	station

	List 3 (80)	List 4 (100)	List 5 (120)
1	safe	harness	cushion
2	against	price	generally
3	smash	flakes	extended
4	reward	silence	custom
5	evening	develop	tailor
6	stream	promptly	haze
7	empty	serious	gracious
8	stone	courage	dignity
9	grove	forehead	terrace
10	desire	distant	applause
11	ocean	anger	jungle
12	bench	vacant	fragrant
13	damp	appearance	interfere
14	timid	speechless	marriage
15	perform	region	profitable
16	destroy	slumber	define
17	delicious	future	obedient
18	hunger	claimed	ambition
19	excuse	common	presence
20	understood	dainty	merchant

	List 6 (140)	List 7 (160)	List 8 (180)	List 9-12 (200)
1	installed	administer	prairies	traverse
2	importance	tremor	evident	affable
3	medicine	environment	nucleus	compressible
4	rebellion	counterfeit	antique	excruciating
5	infected	crisis	twilight	pandemonium
6	responsible	industrious	memorandum	scrupulous
7	liquid	approximate	whimsical	primordial
8	tremendous	society	proportional	chastisement
9	customary	architecture	intangible	sojourn
10	malicious	malignant	formulated	panorama
11	spectacular	pensive	articulate	facsimile
12	inventory	standardize	deprecate	auspicious
13	yearning	exhausted	remarkably	contraband
14	imaginary	reminiscence	contrasting	envisage
15	consequently	intricate	irrelevance	futility
16	excellence	contemporary	supplement	enamoured
17	dungeon	attentively	inducement	gustatory
18	detained	compassionate	nonchalant	decipher
19	abundant	complexion	exuberant	inadequacy
20	compliments	continuously	grotesque	simultaneous

SCORE

List P	
List 1	
List 2	
List 3	
List 4	
List 5	
List 6	
List 7	
List 8	
List 9-12	

Raw Score________________

(Total number of correct words including the words below starting level.)

(Any specific coaching on these particular words will naturally reduce the validity of this test.)

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Takes about 3 minutes
to give and to score.

SLOSSON ORAL READING TEST (SORT)

Copyright © 1963, Richard L. Slosson, M.A.

Keep this test in
safe drawer or file.

This Oral Reading Test is to be given individually and is based on the ability to pronounce words at different levels of difficulty. The words have been taken from standardized school readers and the Reading Level obtained from testing represents median or standardized school achievement. A correlation of .96 (variability on a group of 108 children from first grade thru high school: Gray Mean = 5.0, SORT Mean = 5.0, Gray S.D. = 2.0, SORT S.D. = 2.3) was obtained with the Standardized Oral Reading Paragraphs by William S. Gray, published by The Bobbs-Merril Company, Inc., Indianapolis, Indiana. Permission to use this test by Gray for purposes of validation is deeply appreciated.

A reliability coefficient of .99 (test-retest interval of one week) shows that this Oral Reading Test can be used at frequent intervals to measure a child's progress in reading, providing no specific coaching with these particular words has been given. Such periodic testing can be highly motivating.

DIRECTIONS

1. Allow the child to read from one sheet while you keep score on another. At the start, say the following: *"I want to see how many of these words you can read. Please begin here and read each word aloud as carefully as you can."* (Indicate at what list to start.) *"When you come to a difficult word, do the best you can and if you can't read it, say 'blank' and go on to the next one."*

2. Start a child with a list where you think he can pronounce all 20 words in that one list correctly. Note that each list of words is graded. List P (primer) is for the first few months of first grade. List 1 is for the balance of first grade, List 2 is for second grade, etc. If the starting list is too difficult and the child makes even one mistake, go back until you reach an easier list where he can pronounce all 20 words correctly.

3. After you have found the starting list, go on into more advanced lists until you find the stopping list, where he mispronounces or is unable to read all 20 words. When you reach a point where the words become very difficult, say: *"Look quickly down this list and read the words you think you know."*

4. When a child reads very slowly and takes more than 5 seconds on each and every word, move him along by saying the "blank" for him. Or call out the number of the word at a rate of about 5 seconds each. Still another plan is to use a small card or piece of paper, covering up a word after a 5 second exposure, forcing him on to the next word.

5. Count as an error each mispronounced or omitted word as well as a word which takes more than about 5 seconds to pronounce. (If a child has a speech defect such as a stutter, disregard the 5 second interval and allow as much time as necessary.) Count it an error when a child is uncertain about a word and gives more than one pronunciation, even though one of them may have been correct. Be particularly careful about scoring the word endings as they must be absolutely correct. Keep score by putting a check mark (✓) after each error or a plus sign (+) after each correct word. Enter the number of correct words at the bottom of each list as you go along. An analysis of scatter on the test, as well as an analysis of the types of errors made, will indicate areas of weakness.

6. To find a child's raw score for reading, count the total number of words he was able to pronounce correctly in all lists and add the words below the starting list for which he automatically receives credit. To obtain the Reading Level, look up the value of this raw score in Table 1 below. A simple way to determine the Reading Level is to take half the raw score. For example, if the raw score were 46, half of this number would be 23 and the Reading Level would be 2.3 or the 3rd month of 2nd grade.

TABLE I

CHANGING THE RAW SCORE TO READING LEVEL

(Reading Grade Level is given in years and months. For example, 5.2 means the 2nd month of 5th grade.)

SCORE	GRADE	SCORE	GRADE	SCORE	GRADE	SCORE	GRADE	SCORE	GRADE	SCORE	GRADE	SCORE	GRADE
0-1	0.0	26-27	1.3	52-53	2.6	78-79	3.9	104-105	5.2	130-131	6.5	156-157	7.8
2-3	0.1	28-29	1.4	54-55	2.7	80-81	4.0	106-107	5.3	132-133	6.6	158-159	7.9
4-5	0.2	30-31	1.5	56-57	2.8	82-83	4.1	108-109	5.4	134-135	6.7	160-161	8.0
6-7	0.3	32-33	1.6	58-59	2.9	84-85	4.2	110-111	5.5	136-137	6.8	162-163	8.1
8-9	0.4	34-35	1.7	60-61	3.0	86-87	4.3	112-113	5.6	138-139	6.9	164-165	8.2
10-11	0.5	36-37	1.8	62-63	3.1	88-89	4.4	114-115	5.7	140-141	7.0	166-167	8.3
12-13	0.6	38-39	1.9	64-65	3.2	90-91	4.5	116-117	5.8	142-143	7.1	168-169	8.4
14-15	0.7	40-41	2.0	66-67	3.3	92-93	4.6	118-119	5.9	144-145	7.2	170-171	8.5
16-17	0.8	42-43	2.1	68-69	3.4	94-95	4.7	120-121	6.0	146-147	7.3	172-173	8.6
18-19	0.9	44-45	2.2	70-71	3.5	96-97	4.8	122-123	6.1	148-149	7.4	174-175	8.7
20-21	1.0	46-47	2.3	72-73	3.6	98-99	4.9	124-125	6.2	150-151	7.5	176-177	8.8
22-23	1.1	48-49	2.4	74-75	3.7	100-101	5.0	126-127	6.3	152-153	7.6	178-179	8.9
24-25	1.2	50-51	2.5	76-77	3.8	102-103	5.1	128-129	6.4	154-155	7.7	180-200	9-12

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WRITING SAMPLE

Name: ______________________________ Date: ______________

Introduction: Write as much as you can and take as long as you need to. You don't have to fill up the whole page, but you can if you want to. Don't worry about spelling or handwriting. Just write what you want to say. Sometimes people like to write about some of their reasons for wanting to read and write better. You can write about anything you want to.

Appendix 8

READ/WRITE/NOW GOALS LIST

Name: ______________________________ Date: ________________

Personal Goals:	Can Do	Work On	No
1. Read/write address			
2. Write a shopping list			
3. Write checks			
4. Read bills			
5. Use the phone book			
6. Read a menu			
7. Read/write recipes			
8. Take the driver's test			
9. Read leases or contracts			
10. Read/write letters or notes			
11. Improve math skills			
12. Learn to use computer			
13. Read a newspaper (what parts?)			
14. Read magazines (which ones?)			
15. Read labels & signs			

16. Please check the subjects you like to read about:

__ history
__ politics
__ science
__ love,romance
__ adventure
__ crime
__ occult
__ lives of famous people
__ sports (which ones?)
__ humor
__ "how-to-do-it" books
__ plays
__ poetry
__ science fiction
__ other: ____________________________

	Can Do	Work On	No
17. Read maps & write directions			
18. Cursive writing			
19. Improve printing			
20. Write your life story			
21. Write short stories/poems			
Family:			
1. Read to children			
2. Help children with homework			
3. Read/write notes to childrens' school			
4. Read/write names of family			
Community:			
1. Church reading			
2. Voting registration/information			
3. Find out more about how the government works			
4. Join a group to solve a problem			
Work:			
1. Fill out job applications			
2. Write resumes & cover letters			
3. Read/write telephone messages			
4. Read/write job instructions			
5. Read to learn about other jobs			
6. Read/write memos			
7. Fill out order forms/reports			
8. Take notes at work meetings			

Education:

Here are some educational goals. Write "yes" if you are interested and "no" if you're not:

1. Attend a job training program (what kind?)

2. Attend classes to learn something new (crafts, self-improvement)

3. Pass a work-related test (what type of test?)

4. Study for a GED

5. Other: ______________________________

* Can you think of any other goals you have that aren't on this list?

Of all the goals we've talked about, what are 2 or 3 that are the most important to you right now?

1.

2.

3.

Appendix 9

Burke Reading Interview (Modified)

1. When you are reading and you come to something you don't know, what do you do?

   Do you ever do anything else?

2. Who is a good reader you know?

3. What makes ____________________ a good reader?

4. Do you think _______________ ever comes to something he/she doesn't know?

5. What do you think he/she does about it?
(If answer is NO: Suppose __________ comes to something he/she doesn't know. What do you think he/she would do?)

6. Do you think that _________________ reads everything the same way? For example, would he/she read a want ad in the newspaper the same way as a mystery story?

7. If you know that someone is having difficulty reading something, how would you helpthat person?

8. What would a teacher do to help that person?

9. What would you like to do better as a reader?

Appendix 10

Looking at Your Own Reading Behavior

1. Do you understand most of what you read in class in reading groups?

2. Do you participate in discussions and ask questions about what you read in class if you don't understand?

3. Do you try to predict what's coming when you read by looking at the title, pictures, or thinking about what you already know about the subject you're reading about?

4. Do you ever figure out a word you're not sure of by reading the words around it and guessing what word would make sense?

5. When you read something, do you ever think about how it connects to your own life or to things you know?

6. Do you ask yourself questions about what you read?

7. Do you read outside of class? (If so, what kinds of things, how often and when?)

8. What are your biggest problems as a reader?

9. What are your strengths when it comes to reading?

Appendix 11

Reading Progress Checklist

Reader: ____________________ **Teacher:** ____________________ **Date:** ________

1.	Seems to understand in-class readings	1.
2.	Reports understanding reading outside of class	2.
3.	Participates in pre-reading & post-reading discussions	3.
4.	Connects reading with own experience/ knowledge and questions what is read	4.
5.	Participates in group activities designed to develop reading strategies	5.
6.	Understands that gaining meaning is the purpose of reading	6.
7.	Uses prediction to make sense of text	7.
8.	Willing to guess at unfamiliar words	8.
9.	Uses context to guess at unfamiliar words & make sense of text	9.
10.	Uses prior knowledge of subject to make sense of text	10.
11.	Changes approach to reading depending on the type of text	11.
12.	Uses graphophonic cues appropriately	12.

Comments:

Appendix 12

Writing Progress Checklist

Name ______________________ Date ______________

	Can Do	Needs Work	Not Evident	N/A
A. Process:				
1. Generates language experience stories 1.				
2. Able to select topics to write about 2.				
3. Willing to try to put words on paper 3.				
4. Develops a topic with details 4.				
5. Able to use writing for a variety of purposes 5.				
6. Willing to revise 6.				
7. Using feedback from others to revise 7.				
8. Writes entries in dialogue journal 8.				
9. Writes entries in learning log 9.				
10. Willing to share some pieces with others 10.				
11. Gaining confidence in self as a writer 11.				

Comments/Observations:

		Can Do	Needs Work	Not Evident	N/A
B. Handwriting:					
1. Prints upper case lower case	1.				
2. Leaves spaces between words	2.				
3. Optional Competency: writes cursive	3				
C. Spelling:					
1. Willing to use invented spelling	1.				
2. Uses personal word dictionary to improve spelling and record sight words	2.				
3. Uses word lists/dictionary/thesaurus to check spelling during editing phase	3.				
4. Writes letter(s) that represent consonant sounds	4.				
5. Writes letters that represent digraphs and blends	5.				
6. Writes letter(s) that represent long vowel sounds:					
a. Uses **a_e, ay, ai,** to make long **a** sound	6a.				
b. Uses **ee, ea,** to make long **e** sound	b.				
c. Uses **i_e, igh, y,** to make long **i**	c.				
d. Uses **o_e, oa, oe, ow,** to make long **o** sound	d.				
e. Uses **u_e, ue,** to make long **u**	e.				
7. Writes letters to represent short vowel sounds	7.				
8. Applies the following spelling rules:					
a. -ff, -ll, -ss, -zz	8a.				
b. -k or -ck, -ch or tch, -ge or dge	b.				

		Can Do	Needs Work	Not Evident	N/A
9. Uses "to, too, and two" correctly	9.				
10. Uses "there, their, they're" correctly	10.				
11. Other homonyms used correctly (list them):	11.				
12. Note any spelling error patterns observed:	12.				
D. Mechanics:					
1. Proofreads first drafts	1.				
2. Writes in complete sentences	2.				
3. Uses end punctuation correctly	3.				
4. Uses editing symbols to revise and edit personal writing	4.				
5. Uses capital letters to:					
a. Begin a sentence	5a.				
b. Name people, places and special things	b.				
c. Capitalize the major words in a title	c.				
6. Uses commas to separate items in a list	6.				
7. Uses "______" around the words people say out loud	7.				
8. Goes down to a new line and indents when beginning a new paragraph	8.				
9. Uses an apostrophe to show possession	9.				
10. Uses an apostrophe to make a contraction	10.				
11. Uses verbs in the correct tense	11.				

12. Note any other skills writer has developed:

Appendix 13

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MISCUE ANALYSIS FORM

Pre ☐
Post ☐

Student________________________ Selection________________________
Date____________ Class____________ Evaluator________________________

I. DIALECT EVIDENCE________________________

____

II. SOUND-LETTER RELATIONSHIPS:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	HIGH	SOME	NONE	% HIGH & SOME
Graphic similarity																													

III. GRAMMATICAL RELATIONSHIPS:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	ACCEPTABLE	UNACCEPTABLE	% ACCEPT.
Grammatical acceptability																												

IV. MEANING RELATIONSHIPS:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	YES	SOME	NO	% YES
Correction																													

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	YES	SOME	NO	% NO
Meaning change																													

V. PATTERNS OF STRENGTH & WEAKNESS:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	TOTAL NO.	TOTAL %
Strength																											
Some strength																											
Weakness																											

VI. RETELLING:

Character identification	________	of 15
Character description	________	of 10
Events in succession	________	of 35
Summary of plot	________	of 10
Theme, moral, or message	________	of 20
Intro. of pers. exper.	________	of 10
Total retelling score	________	of 100

VII(A). REPEATED MISCUES:

____
____
____
____

(B). NON-WORD SUBSTITUTIONS________

(C). OMISSIONS
CAUSING MEANING CHANGE________

VIII. BAR GRAPH SUMMARY:

	0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
Retelling score	
Strength	
Some strength	
Weakness	
Meaning change	
Correction	
Gram. acceptability	
Graphic similarity	
	0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

IX. EVALUATION & RECOMMENDATION

____
____
____
____
____
____
____

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Appendix 14

LEARNING CONTRACT

	What do you want to do?	How do you plan to do it?
Reading Goals:		
Writing Goals:		
Other:		

____________________ ____________________ __________

Learner's Signature Teacher's Signature Date

Contract Review Date: ____________

Learner's Comments: Teacher's Comments:

GOALS LIST

Name: ____________________ Date: ________ Interviewer: ____________________

Part I: In your own words, can you tell me your reasons for coming to school now?

Part II: Here are some goals other students in this program have mentioned. Tell me if this is something you already can do, something you would like to do, or something you really have no interest in. (Write YES **or** NO **and/or** Comments **after each item.)**

Personal

Read write your name and address

Read signs (which ones):

Read labels/instructions

Read/write notes to/from family

Read and write shopping lists

Read a calendar, bus schedules, TV guides

Use a phone book

Read menus or recipes

Read bills

Write checks

Read maps

Read information related to health

Fill out forms

Read/write personal letters

Read the newspaper (which sections):

Read magazines (which ones)

Use a dictionary

Improve handwriting

Children

Read to your children/grandchildren
Ages:

Help children with homework

Read/write notes from school

Take part in school-related meetings and events

Personal - Books and Writing

Read books for enjoyment (what kind – adventure, mystery, romance, historical, books about people):

Read books to get information (what kind – personal research, current events, jobs, children, health, religious, hobbies, entertainment):

Write for yourself (what kinds – journal or diary, experiences you've had, advice for others, your opinions, reports about something you've read, your life story or autobiography, other stories, poems, words to songs):

Work

Fill out a job application

Use reading to find out about jobs

Use reading to learn to do your job better or open a business

Read and write notes from and to co-workers

Read or write work reports, logs, announcements

Fill out order forms/lists

Participate in work-related meetings; take notes.

Community

- Register to vote
- Apply for citizenship
- Read leases/contracts
- Apply for a library card
- Take the driving test
- Participate in community meetings/clubs/religious meetings
- Join a group to work on a problem
- Publish a newsletter or other writing

Education

- Attend a job training program
- Attend classes to learn something new (hobbies, self-improvement)
- Pass a work-related test
- Get a GED

Part III: **Can you think of any other goals you have which we have not mentioned?**

Part IV: **Of all the goals we have mentioned, name two or three which are most important to you right now.**

MANY LITERACIES:
Modules for Training Adult Beginning Readers
and Tutors

By Marilyn Gillespie

Center for International Education
285 Hills House South
University of Massachusetts
Amherst, MA 01003 USA

Appendix 16

DAILY LOG

DATE						
TODAYŚ GOALS						
SUBJECT Book:title, chapter name, page number. Worksheets: title, page.						
GROUP WORK Subject or topic. Activity or Worksheet						
YOUR COMMENTS						
TEACHER COMMENTS						
GOAL FOR NEXT TIME						

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Appendix 17

EDUCATIONAL GOALS

THESE ARE MY EDUCATIONAL GOALS.

I WILL WORK ON THEM EACH DAY.

GOALS LIST	DATE GOAL ACHIEVED
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

other information about Goals:

Appendix 18

NAME:______________________'s GOALS LIST for EDUCATION PLAN

LIFE SKILLS To read...	I know/do this	I would like to know more		Does this subject remind you of anything else that interests you?	
		now	later	YES	
and write my name					
and write my address					
and write my phone number					
and write my social security					
labels/instructions/cost of...					
food					
medicine					
clothes					
appliances					
To read...					
a calendar					
a bus schedule					
t.v. guide					
a phone book					
menus/recipes					
bills					
maps					
newspapers					
magazines					
health information					
To read...					
and write checks					
and write letters					
and fill out forms					
and use a dictionary					

LIFE SKILLS To read...	I know/ do this	I would like to know more		Does this subjectremind you of anything else that interests you?	
		now	later	YES	
Children					
Read to children/grandchildren					
Help my child with homework					
Write notes to school					
Read notes from school					
Personal reading for...					
enjoyment					
adventure					
mystery					
romance					
historical					
people stories					
other:					
reading for...					
self-help					
recovery(alcohol/drugs)					
personal interest					
current events					
jobs					
children					
health					
physical					
emotional					
religious/spiritual					
reading for...					
hobbies					
entertaiment					
Personal writing					
poems /songs					
improve handwriting					
To write...					
journal/diary					
advice to others					
work/school reports					
newsletter					
to/for newspaper					

Other: Any other skills you would be interested in learning.

READING SKILLS	I know/ do this	I would like to know more		Does this subjectremind you of anythingelse that interests yo	
		now	later	YES	
For Work:					
fill out a job application					
read want ads					
read notices					
read reports					
fill out forms					
take notes at meetings					
For Community Life:					
open a checking account					
register to vote					
apply for a library card					
take a learner's permit test					
For English and other skills:					
capitalization					
punctuation					
spelling					
parts of speech(nouns,verbs)					
grammar/sentence structure					
definitions					
understanding what I read					
For GED Tests : See separate sheets for specific topic breakdown.					
GED Writing/Reading					
GED Literature					
GED Social Studies					
GED Science					
For College Reading:					
comprehension					
test taking skills					
term papers					

LIFE SKILLS for math...	I know/ do this	I would like to know more		Does this subject remind you of anything else that interests you?	
		now	later	YES	
Daily life write dates as numbers					
tell time					
write the time					
find a batting average					
add/subtract dollars/cents					
add/subtract change					
estimate shopping $ total					
find savings from sales/coupons					
use unit price buying food					
compare cost of generic and brand name medicine					
read correct drug dosage					
read thermometer					
use cooking measures					
find total calories					
know nutrition information					
measure with standard ruler/tape					
measure with metric ruler/tape					
convert measures					
use map...local					
state					
U.S.					
find car mileage					
total a restuarant check					
figure sales tax					
read sales tax chart					

LIFE SKILLS for math	I know/ do this	I would like to know more		Does this subject remind you of anything else that interests you?	
		now	later		
Budget: rent,food,clothes medical,education,fun...					
make a budget					
set savingsgoals					
find annual car expense					
figure total cost of bill					
(phone,electric,heat,etc.)					
how to save on energy					
figure credit card charges					
figure total cost of installment plan					
find interest on money					
find lowest rental cost					
use a checkbook/passbook					
deposit					
withdraw					
balance					
Home Improvement					
estimate cost of home repair					
find dimensions for scale drawing					
figure amount of materials (paint,insulation,rug)					
Work					
take a pre-employment test					
understand paycheck					
(net,gross,over-time)					
compare benefits					
do a supply order					
schedule work hours					

Other

any other skills you would be interested in learning

MATH SKILLS	I know/ do this	I would like to know more		Does this subject remind you of anything elsethat interests you?	
		now	later	YES	
Math and other skills:					
addition					
subtraction					
multiplication					
division					
weights/measures					
measurement-standard					
measurement-metric					
telling time					
decimals					
fractions					
ratio/proportion					
percent					
word problems					
GED Math: See seperate sheets for specific topic breakdown.					
GED Math					
Algebra					
Geometry					
Work					
job training math					
take job related math test					
College Math					
test taking skills					
review work					

Appendix 19

MONTHLY REVIEW

WHAT I LEARNED IN THE MONTH OF____________,19__

WHAT I LEARNED IN THE MONTH OF____________,19__

WHAT I LEARNED IN THE MONTH OF___________,19__

Remember: Think of what you have learned in and out of class.

Appendix 20

GED PRIORITY MATH CHECKLIST

Check here when done.

Check Here and write book name, if done in a different book.

GEOMETRY

Angles

Identify a

right angle in a concrete way
in a graphic way
in a verbal way
and as a formula...........

straight angle in a concrete way
in a graphic way
in a verbal way
and as a formula..............

a circle in a concrete way
in a graphic way
in a verbal way
and as a formula...........

Draw different angles(45°,90°,180°)
and estimate angle size

Triangles

Make a straight line angle into a triangle

Identify isoseles triangles
equilateral triangle
right triangles

Compare angles in adjacent triangles

Using ratio/proportion, solve problems

Right triangles and Pathagorean Formula

Identify right triangles

Read and practice Pythagorean Formula

Solve problems using Formula $C^2 = A^2 + B^2$

Coordinates

Identify a point (ordered pair)

Plot a point, given X,Y

Estimate X,Y coordinates, when given an ordered pair

GED PRIORITY MATH CHECKLIST

Check Here when done. | Check Here and write book name, if done in a different book.

ALGEBRA

identify "set-up" or "the expression that represents" problems ______

solving "set-up" problems ______

practice "set-up" problems ______

evaluate expressions and formulas

+ - ______

x - ______

parentheses ______

with exponents ______

using a formula ______

equations

guess missing numbers-verbal ______

guess missing numbers-written ______

check solution ______

guess missing number-written ______

strategies for doing equations ______

FRACTIONS DECIMALS PERCENTS

identify a fraction
    graphically______ ______
    verbally______ ______
    as a notation______
do a fraction activity
        physical______ ______
        verbal practice______ ______
        ruler fractions______ ______

use decimals in everyday activities
    decimal practice worksheets ______

use percents in everyday activities
    read meaning of percent______ ______
    change percent to decimal______ ______
    change percent to fraction______ ______
    change decimal to percent ______ ______
memorize basic percent meanings______ ______
practice problems with percent grid______ ______

GED PRIORITY MATH CHECKLIST

	Check Here when done.	Check Here and write book name, if done in a different book.
PERIMETER, AREA AND VOLUME		
PERIMETER		
Identify it in a concrete way		
Identify it in a graphic way		
Identify it in a verbal way		
Identify it as a formula/notation		
Do a practice sheet using a formula		
Find perimeter of figures		
Setting up the problem worksheet		
Perimeter: Circumference of circle		
Do Worksheets for practice		
AREA		
Identify it in a concrete way		
Identify it in a graphic way		
Identify it in a verbal way		
Identify it as a formula/notation		
Find the area worksheet		
VOLUME		
Identify it in a concrete way		
Identify it in a graphic way		
Identify it in a verbal way		
Identify it as a formula/notation		
Find volume worksheet		
Finding a value worksheet		
FORMULA PAGE		
Familiarity with the Formula Page		

GED PRIORITY MATH CHECKLIST

	Check Here when done	Check Here and write book name,if done in a different book.
NOTATION		
identify different ways to show + - X ÷		
Rules of Order:My Dear Aunt Sally		
exponents		
Excuse My Dear Aunt Sally		
exponents-squared and cubed		
scientific notation		
radical sign		
parentheses		
Please Excuse My Dear Aunt Sally		
doing PEMDAS expressions		
reading and understanding PEMDAS		
PROBLEM SOLVING		
deciding if a problem uses + - X ÷		
identifying words used in + - X ÷		
practice deciding + or -		
practice deciding X or ÷		
sort word problems by + - X ÷		
LEARNING STRATEGIES FOR SOLVING PROBLEMS		
read and discuss different solutions		
look at samples of solutions		
do a review		
do"Solving Word Problem"packet		
check answers		

Learner-centered approaches to assessment & evaluation in adult literacy

Volume 2

Ongoing

adventures in ASSESSMENT

May 1992

Funded by the Massachusetts Department of Education

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SABES

System for Adult Basic Education Support

SABES is the System for Adult Basic Education Support, a comprehensive training and technical assistance initiative for adult literacy educators and programs. Its goal is to strengthen and enhance literacy services and thus to enable adult learners to attain literacy skills. SABES accomplishes this goal through staff and program development workshops, consultation, mini-courses, mentoring and peer coaching, and other training activities provided by five Regional Support Centers located at community colleges throughout Massachusetts.

SABES also maintains an adult literacy Clearinghouse to collect, evaluate, and disseminate ABE materials, curricula, methodologies, and program models. Each of the five SABES Regional Support Centers similarly offers program support and a lending library. SABES maintains an Adult Literacy Hotline, a statewide referral service which responds to calls from new learners and volunteers. The Hotline number is 1-800-447-8844.

The SABES Central Resource Center, located at World Education, publishes a statewide quarterly newsletter, "Bright Ideas," and journals on topics of interest to adult literacy professionals, such as this volume of "Adventures in Assessment."

The first three volumes of "Adventures in Assessment" present a comprehensive view of the state of practice in Massachusetts through articles written by adult literacy practitioners. Volume 1, Getting Started, *included start-up and intake activities. Volume 2,* Ongoing, *shares tools for ongoing assessment as part of the learning process; Volume 3,* Looking Back, Starting Again, *focused on tools and procedures used at the end of a cycle or term, including self, class, and group evaluation by both teachers and learners. Volume 4 covered a range of interests. Volume 5,* Tale of the Tools *was dedicated to reflecting on component 3 tools of alternative assessment. Volume 6,* Responding to the Dream Conference, *was dedicated to responses to Volumes 1-5. Volume 7,* The Partnership Project, *highlighted writings from a mentoring project for practitioners interested in learning about participatory assessment. Volume 8 covered a range of topics from education reform to learner involvement in assessment. Volume 9 looked at assessment in a volunteer program, native language literacy, ESOL programs, and evaluations in workplace education programs.*

We would like to see your contribution, especially if you are doing native language literacy or low-level ESOL literacy. Contact editor, Alison Simmons, to discuss your submission.

Permission is granted to reproduce portions of this journal. We request appropriate credit be given to "Adventures in Assessment" and to the author.

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Boston, MA 02210-1211
617-482-9485

Learner-centered approaches to assessment & evaluation in adult literacy

Volume 2

Editor: Loren McGrail

adventures in ASSESSMENT

May 1992

Foreword

Loren McGrail

This second issue of *Adventures in Assessment* looks at ongoing assessment--the ways we document learning as it takes place and the ways we integrate it into instruction. As the authors in this volume remind us, ongoing assessment is part of the learning process--"inseparable from good teaching practice" (Isserlis, p. 41). Ongoing assessment is essential for both learners and teachers because "it helps keep learners aware of their own progress and development as learners. It keeps teachers aware of learners' needs, which is vital to planning relevant and effective teaching activities" (Kelly, p. 5).

Ongoing assessment means looking at learners' progress over time in various areas which may include what counts as changes in:

- reading
- writing
- oral language use
- uses of literacy
- social changes inside and outside the classroom
- personal or affective abilities
- metacognitive strategies
- mathematics

Alternative approaches to assessment introduce procedures that enable adult literacy students to evaluate their own experience and progress. They also help teachers to "identify the strategies students use and how these strategies change as learners progress" (Robishaw, p. 59). Thus, they help to inform the development of curriculum which is based on learners evolving progress or change in all or some of the above areas.

The tools and procedures that have been developed to measure these changes in ongoing assessment include:

- journals (personal and group)
- writing portfolios
- checklists and charts (process and progress)
- class accomplishments
- teacher logs
- student logs

In this volume of *Adventures in Assessment*, seven authors share their thoughts, experiments, and questions about ongoing assessment with the hope that other ABE practitioners will be encouraged to adapt these tools in ways that make sense for their own teaching/learning contexts.

Defining the Portfolio

It is important to note that there are at least three different meanings of the word "portfolio" in use in alternative assessment and in this publication. A **writing portfolio** refers to collecting student writing in a folder for the purpose of recording and documenting growth over a period of time. The **progress portfolio** is a collection of all the procedures and tools a teacher might use for assessing progress or change (i.e., the toolkit). Both Paul Trunnell and Janet Kelly use "progress portfolio" to refer to documenting, collecting, and analyzing various kinds of assessors which include everything from standardized tests to writing process checklists. Finally, the **presentation portfolio** (as described by David Rosen) shares many of the same qualities as the progress portfolio but is also used by the learner for presentation purposes much like an artist's portfolio.

The Toolmaker and the Tool

Portfolio approaches to assessment are the current rage in K -12 education and now, increasingly in adult basic education. The danger in both contexts is that we may recreate some of the problems of the very system we are trying to change. If all we do is substitute new multiple measures for old standardized measurements and monitor student progress for diagnostic purposes in terms of identifying strengths and weaknesses in language and content areas, we will not have created a new paradigm. If on the other hand we include learners as active participants at the center of the process of measurement, as "co-investigators in determining their own literacy practices, strengths, and strategies," (Lytle, 1988) then we have truly engaged in alternative assessment. In addition, if we only look for change in language and content areas, we miss the chance to document change in other areas, for example, affective changes such as improved self-confidence, the ability to participate in a group, or the ability to use literacy to address changes in family or community life.

Finally, alternative assessment must serve the development of a curriculum process and of adult literacy programs as a whole. We need to be clear that the pedagogical beliefs and assumptions that we espouse are truly reflected in the procedures and tools we are developing. First came the toolmaker, then the tool.

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Introduction

"We must be less technical and more critically reflective of what we do and are, that we must set aside our 'How?' questions and begin to ask and reask 'What?' and 'Why?'"
Virginia Sauvé

The contributors to Volume Two of *Adventures in Assessment* are practitioners who have written critical reflections about what and why as well as how they have developed ongoing assessment procedures and tools.

"The Progress Portfolio" by **David Rosen** describes an assessment-presentation model currently being tried with young adults throughout the country. As Rosen states, "this portfolio model has the advantage of providing direct, performance-based assessment of writing, mathematics, problem-solving, oral presentation, job readiness, and even vocational skills."

In "Keeping Us Aware," **Janet Kelly** continues her description of the procedures, tools, and processes that make up her portfolio approach in a "learning community." As in Volume One, she has included the tools and forms with a focus this time on reading and writing assessment and learning logs kept by both learners and teachers.

Paul Trunnell, from Harborside Community Center in East Boston, describes in "Self-Assessment: Doing and Reflecting" a portfolio approach similar to Janet Kelly's for assessment with his ABE 2 students. He describes, in detail, two ongoing assessment procedures he has had success with: the learning log and the skills evaluation sheet.

In "When Asking Isn't Enough," **Kathy Brucker** documents a variety of evaluation tools she has used with her Spanish speaking students at El Centro del Cardenal in Boston. Her critique of checklists that don't ask "which did you enjoy and why?" reminds us all that we need to adapt tools to fit our own contexts and answer our own questions.

Janet Isserlis from the International Institute in Providence, Rhode Island writes in "What You See: Ongoing Assessment in the ESL/Literacy Classroom" about action research on how adult learners progress in and out of the classroom. Her focus is on ongoing observation, reflection, and feedback aimed at assisting learners and facilitators. Her anecdotal reports provide a model for what, why, and how to write up daily observations.

Karen Ebbit, Priscilla Lee, Pam Nelson, and Joann Wheeler from the Community Learning Center in Cambridge describe in "Three by Three by Four: Ongoing Assessment at the Community Learning Center" their cooperative effort to develop assessment tools used with ESL/literacy students. They describe the creation of a "three-part/three-tool" process which includes an initial goal-setting exercise, a weekly self-assessment, and a progress record. The tools were field tested in three ESL classes during the summer of 1991.

In "Further Adventures in Alternative Assessment: an Annotated Bibliography," **Don Robishaw** outlines some key principles underlying ongoing assessment and cites four annotations from the bibliography.

While all of these writings fall under ongoing assessment, there are many other lenses through which to view and analyze these writings. One way to look at these articles is to examine the myriad ways practitioners have gone about documenting their experiments. For example, even though all three teachers at the Community Learning Center were testing a jointly designed initial goal-setting tool, each of them describes different objectives for doing this activity. Compare the evolution of the forms and tools Paul Trunnel developed for his ABE learners to the way Brucker developed her tools. How are their processes similar? How are they different? What kinds of information do these tools give? How do they compare to the kind of anecdotal reporting Isserlis does daily in her classroom? If progress is achieved, for whom is it achieved and by whom?

Another way to look at these writings is to try to determine to what extent they document the kinds of changes mentioned in the foreword and how they accomplish this. Which tools work best for measuring which kinds of change or progress? Which ones work best with which kinds of learners?

It is my personal hope that future editions of this journal will include reactions or comments to these writings in the form of letters to the editor or descriptions of a tool or procedure borrowed and tested out. I would also like to encourage people to write about the process involved in choosing and developing certain tools--the burning issues and questions that prompted you to explore another form of assessment. Although the backbone of this publication is the research and writing of Massachusetts classroom teachers, in future issues I will continue to encourage submissions from practitioners who are not classroom teachers, such as David Rosen, Interim Director of the Adult Literacy Resource Institute in Boston or from out-of-state practitioners such as Janet Isserlis from Rhode Island who has been a pioneer teacher researcher in adult literacy. I would like to encourage anyone and everyone to think about reviewing and annotating an article or book for this journal and for the annotated assessment notebook at your SABES Regional Support Center.

I would like to express my thanks to the SABES Central Resource Center staff who contributed their time and skill to this project: Laura Purdom, Sally Waldron, and Lou Wolrab.

Volume Three of *Adventures in Assessment* is expected out in the fall of 1993 and will focus on "Looking Back" activities that come at the end of a cycle and that help teachers and learners reflect on what they have and haven't accomplished. Many of the activities in "Looking Back" will be the same as in earlier volumes and will look at progress over a specific period of time. Thus, we will be looking for writings that fit into all three components: initial, ongoing and end-of-cycle assessment with a special emphasis on class and program evaluations.

-- Loren McGrail

Please refer to p. 62 for information on how to submit articles. Deadline for Volume 3 is June 14, 1992.

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The Progress Portfolio

David J. Rosen

Since the end of the 1980's, writing portfolio assessment has become a hot idea in public schools. Teachers are using writing portfolios in major urban school systems in Pittsburgh and Rochester. Vermont includes them in its statewide school assessment process. And since 1990, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has added portfolio assessment to its list of ways to measure student writing. Portfolio assessment has spread so quickly that by the spring of 1990, the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory's test center could establish a portfolio information clearinghouse to publish and update a bibliography on portfolio assessment practices.

Not surprisingly, teachers of adults and out-of-school young adults have also been experimenting with portfolios. As early as September 1989, in an article which appeared in the New York City Literacy Assistance Center Update, LAC staff member, Sara Hill suggested that adult literacy programs could use writing assessment portfolios and described them as follows:

> "The writing folder or portfolio is a way of keeping track of the changes in individual student writing and contains all writing from the beginning of the class--scraps, notes, drawings, lists, drafts, revisions, final pieces, etc. Journal entries, too, may be important to keep in the folder. All should be dated so that you can have a clear sense of writing growth and both student and teacher should have access to it--perhaps keeping it in a special 'folder box.' From time to time the teacher and student should go through the folder, with the student selecting 'favorite' and 'least favorite pieces' and talking about what worked and didn't work. Teacher and student might also note changes in the spelling and mechanics of writing over time and whether or not a student is revising or has discovered new revision strategies..."

While much attention has been given to whole language portfolios as a means of assessing writing, there is another portfolio model, less-known but more comprehensive. With this model, learners and teachers can assess writing and other basic skills improvement. And with this model a learner can also document a wide range of learning accomplishments and polish and present them to others.

The Purpose

The model is a blend of writing folder assessment and a tangible collection of finished products which is something like an artist's portfolio. This

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assessment-presentation model is currently being tried with young adults in a number of youth service corps around the country. This portfolio model has the advantage of providing direct, performance-based assessment of writing, mathematics, problem-solving, oral presentation, job readiness, and even vocational skills. It uses simple, low-cost materials such as a folder, three-ring binder, and cardboard artist's portfolio case, and can include written and audio- and video-recorded demonstrations of skill and knowledge.

The presentation portfolio has several purposes:

- to provide a single place where a learner can record and keep evidence of learning from other parts of his or her life;
- to be a way a learner can show family, friends, teachers, prospective employers and training programs, and college admissions officers what that person can do;
- to recognize a learner's accomplishments;
- to be a learner-centered assessment process, one which begins with the student's needs and goals in a student-created learning plan, links assessment and documentation of achievement to those goals, and puts choices about what, when, and how assessment is done in the control of the learner; and
- to provide an organized way to collect and effectively present, direct evidence of learning which a learner may need for "attainment of competencies," certification, graduation, getting a job, and entering training and/or college.

As with a writing assessment portfolio, the focus of this model is on learner growth, but here attention is also paid to recognizing and effectively presenting achievement to others. As with writing assessment portfolio models, learners keep their writings in a folder, and they are periodically reviewed for growth; but in this model learners also polish and organize writings and other evidence of learning for presentation. Every learner has a three-ring loose-leaf binder with tabbed dividers and plastic sheet protectors. Some learners may also have a cardboard artist's portfolio case to hold nonprint items such as audio and video cassettes, or other, larger evidences of learning.

In the binder, or **achievement portfolio**, learners can place selected samples of their best written work: poems, original song lyrics, a short autobiography, stories, essays, letters, a resume, a completed college application, and before-and-after photographs of visually-oriented projects they have done on their own or with others. Learners can also include other evidence of newly-acquired abilities, such as results of written tests which they believe demonstrate their skills or knowledge, or letters others have written about their knowledge, skills, or character.

Although the achievement portfolio, sometimes called a presentation portfolio or interview portfolio, might include some materials describing the learning center or program, the purpose is to put the learner's work in context, not to document the program's achievements. Also the achievement portfolio is intended to show the learner's accomplishments in meeting her or his own goals, not to compare one learner with one another.

Each item included in the loose-leaf binder or portfolio case should be a clear piece of evidence of

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the learner's ability to do something, for example:

- to show clarity about one's personal and career goals a learner includes a list of goals and a short plan for future learning and skill development with her anticipated timeframes;

- to demonstrate his knowledge of community resources, his ability to do research by telephone, and to present the written results of his research a learner includes a five-page, word-processed directory of government-subsidized, childcare resources which are located near the learning center (he also did the word processing);

- as evidence of her ability to measure area, and to paint walls, a student includes before-and-after photographs, including close-ups, of the apartment she painted; with these she includes the sheet which shows how she calculated how much paint she needed;

- to show his understanding of how state government works, a student includes his word processed letters to his state senator and representative urging support for a bill to increase funding for adult literacy education;

- to show his readiness for work as a commercial driver, a learner includes his new license. (This was his main goal when he entered the center.);

- to demonstrate group presentation and facilitation skills, a learner includes in her portfolio case a videotape of her facilitating discussion in a study circle, and of her presentation to the learning center advisory committee on the center's new learning progress assessment tool: portfolios!;
- as evidence of readiness to enter college, a learner includes her GED diploma, a completed Financial Aid form, and completed applications to three colleges; and

- as one piece of evidence of work readiness, a young adult learner includes the award he received for perfect class attendance.

The Process

A student begins the portfolio process by creating a **development (or everyday) portfolio** when she enrolls in the learning center. Initial assessments of needs, learning goals, and possibly a learning style inventory can be included in this catch-all collection which is kept in a large expandable folder or Pendaflex folder containing separate file folders for each kind of work. Each week, she adds completed pieces and work-in-process to the development portfolio and she reviews it informally with her teacher(s) and/or other learners to assess her progress in attaining her goals.

At the end of each cycle, she uses the development portfolio for a more formal review of her progress, to determine areas of improvement, and to revise old goals and set new ones. At this time she may also decide what audiences she hopes to present the achievement portfolio to and she may select (and possibly polish) the pieces she wishes to put in her achievement portfolio binder or case for presentation. In programs which have specific graduation requirements, such as adult, external or alternative diploma programs, a learner may incorporate these goals and objectives in her learning plan, and the divisions of her achievement portfolio might reflect these. Where students are at beginning levels of basic skills, or English language learning, the achievement portfolio will most likely reflect intermediate accomplishments, and the audiences are more likely to be the learner herself, family, friends, and teachers or tutors. More advanced learners will probably select accomplishments for an audience of current or prospective employers or training programs or college admissions personnel.

As the achievement portfolio grows, the learner will add new tabbed dividers. Depending on the learner's interests and the type of learning center program, tabbed sections might include: **personal learning plan** (including needs and goals); **competency checklists; test results; licenses, certificates and awards; work readiness documents** (including a resume and any employer letters of recommendation); and **writing samples** (typed poems, essays, letters, etc.). Some learners will want to emphasize personal creativity; others will focus on work readiness; many will want to stress academic achievement. As the portfolio's purpose is to represent the learner's achievement from her point of view, these decisions should be left to the learner. Teachers and other learners should, of course, feel free to make suggestions.

When a learner is ready to use the achievement portfolio for employment or entering further education or training, program staff or other learners assist her in learning strategies for presenting it. The achievement portfolio is intended to be a flexible tool. A loose-leaf binder is used so that its contents can be easily reorganized for a specific audience, including only those accomplishments which are pertinent to that audience.

The learner should not rely on the binder or audio or videotapes to present herself, but should use these as props for presenting herself. She should also have many opportunities to role play, rehearse or practice presenting her achievement portfolio materials with other learners, learning center staff, and visitors as her audience.

David Rosen is Interim Director of the Adult Literacy Resource Institute in Boston.

Notes

"Northwest Report," The newsletter of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, April, 1990. Available at no charge from NWREL, 101 S.W. Main St., Suite 500, Portland, OR 97204.

Hill, S. "Alternative Assessment Strategies: Some Suggestions for Teachers." Vol. VI, No. 1, (September, 1989) issues of *Update*, a publication of the Literacy Assistance Center, 15 Dutch St., 4th Floor, New York, NY 10038.

Information about a national youth service corps portfolio assessment model is available from the Urban Corps Expansion Project, Public/Private Ventures, 399 Market St., Philadelphia, PA 19106

Keeping Us Aware

Janet Kelly

Ongoing assessment is essential for learners and teachers. Effective ongoing assessment helps keep learners aware of their own progress and development. It also keeps teachers aware of learners' needs, which is vital to planning relevant and effective activities. At Read/Write/Now, we have been using a variety of tools as part of ongoing assessment. Some of them are used primarily by teachers, some are used by learners, and some are shared. As much as possible, the tools and process of ongoing assessment are integrated into the curriculum.

The key element that gives assessment meaning is consistent communication with every learner. This is formalized in conferences and with the help of particular forms, but the communication about learning that happens among learners and between learners and teachers is largely informal and happens in virtually every aspect of classroom life. Classes are small (usually not more than 12 learners in a class) and teachers and trained tutors are accessible and interested in what learners have to say about their lives, the things they care about, and what they think about their own learning.

Looking back at dialogue journals and the work in a learner's writing folder can be used to see writing development. Showing a learner, who is discouraged about spelling, the first entry s/he made in a dialogue journal or the first draft of an earlier piece of writing and comparing it with the current work is a tangible and very convincing way to document the progress s/he has made.

Periodic review of students' learning contracts to look at progress toward meeting goals and to revise goals or plans to meet them are also part of ongoing assessment in our program. This winter, we began the class cycle with a 20 minute individual conference with each learner. Since all were returning students, we used the conferences to review their goals with them and revise their learning contracts as needed. With a few learners whose attendance and commitment had been a problem during the previous cycle, the conferences were an opportunity to discuss any barriers to their learning and ways to overcome the barriers, with a clear plan of things we could do and things they could do. This seemed to work well. It gave both teachers and learners an opportunity to articulate what our individual and shared responsibilities are as members of a learning community.

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* See *Adventures in Assessment,* Vol.1 "Read/Write/Now Adult Learning Center Assessment Adventures" for a description of **miscue analysis**.

The Tools

The tools and organizers we use as part of ongoing assessment are:

- **miscue analysis***
- **book list**
- **reading conference record**
- **reading progress checklist**
- **teacher's log**
- **learning log**
- **math activities record**
- **writing progress checklist**
- **writing process checklist**
- **spelling self-test**
- **writing conference record**
- **dialogue journals**

This may seem like a lot of paper, and it is. At this point, all of these forms are useful to our program. We are continually struggling to strike an appropriate balance between "wouldn't it be wonderful if we could write down everything that shows what people are learning and they could share in the process" and the real limitations of time. What is most important to keep asking ourselves is, "Who and what is this for?" If a particular tool or process makes sense in the light of that question--if it serves the purpose of telling learners and teachers more about learners' progress--it stays until we find something better.

The Portfolio

Read/Write/Now uses a portfolio approach to maintain a comprehensive record of ongoing assessment. A learner's portfolio is added to and shared with the learner during regular conferences throughout the class cycle and at other times when a learner needs to see concrete evidence of his/her progress. The portfolio can also be used to document progress to funders. Although this approach tends to be more comprehensive than many funders have time or interest in seeing, it helps to organize evaluation materials in a way that makes writing narrative summaries for funding reports easier.

Sample materials used at Read/Write/Now for ongoing assessment follow. Descriptions of "what, why, how, and when" precede each form.

Booklist

What: form for learners to keep track of books they read in and out of class; part of assessment portfolio

Why: to show learners concrete evidence of accomplishment in reading; to help teachers identify interests of readers to help make recommendations for other books

How: learner is encouraged to keep list in folder and add each title as s/he finishes book

When: ongoing

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BOOK LIST

NAME:____________________________

NAMES OF BOOKS READ	**DATE FINISHED**
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	
11.	
12.	
13.	
14.	

Reading Progress Checklist

What: teacher's short checklist for assessment of individual learner's reading behavior and development over period of class cycle

Why: to organize and categorize reading assessment information in an accessible format; to help teachers plan strategy lessons and activities for individuals and reading groups

How: teacher considers learner's reading behavior in class, reading conferences, miscue analysis, learner's self-assessment, and responses to modified Burke Interview*

When: after learner has been in classes for approximately three weeks and after above activities are completed; repeated at end of cycle to assess changes

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* See *Adventures in Assessment*, Vol.1 "Read/Write/Now Adult Learning Center Assessment Adventures" for a description of the **modified Burke interview**.

Reading Progress Checklist

Reader: ____________________ **Teacher:** ____________________ **Date:** ________

			Often Evident	Sometimes Evident	Rarely Evident	Not Yet Evident
1.	Seems to understand in-class readings	1.				
2.	Reports understanding reading outside of class	2.				
3.	Participates in pre-reading & post-reading discussions	3.				
4.	Connects reading with own experience/ knowledge and questions what is read	4.				
5.	Participates in group activities designed to develop reading strategies	5.				
6.	Understands that gaining meaning is the purpose of reading	6.				
7.	Uses prediction to make sense of text	7.				
8.	Willing to guess at unfamiliar words	8.				
9.	Uses context to guess at unfamiliar words & make sense of text	9.				
10.	Uses prior knowledge of subject to make sense of text	10.				
11.	Changes approach to reading depending on the type of text	11.				
12.	Uses graphophonic cues appropriately	12.				

Comments:

Reading Conference Record

What: a form to be used by either teachers or readers to record questions, observations, and reflections about sustained reading

Why: for *readers* to keep a running record of words they want to find out about, questions they have about what they are reading, pages read, etc. For *teachers* to keep a running record of individual reading conferences, learners' experience of reading particular texts, problem words, observations about strategies used during brief oral reading samples, responses to stories, evidence of comprehension in retelling

How: readers or teachers use each page to record reading responses or conference results for two different class days. Reading conference records for each learner are kept and used as part of their assessment portfolios (See also, appendix 1, "Suggestions for Individual Reading Conferences.")

When: whenever individual reading conferences are done; usually once weekly when individual sustained silent reading replaces reading in small groups

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READING CONFERENCE RECORD

Reader: ______________________ **Teacher:** ______________________________

Date: __________________ **Book:** ____________________________________

Start Page _______ **Finish Page** _______

Date: __________________ **Book:** ____________________________________

Start Page _______ **Finish Page** _______

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Teacher's Log: Observations and Reflections

What: a running log of observations, anecdotes, and critical incidents related to learners' reading, writing, and other development. Each page has room for brief notes on six learners: observations, reflections, and ideas for what to do next either in response to the particular need noted or in general.

Why: to help teachers use what learners do and say about their own learning to direct curriuculm planning, as well as to keep a record of learners' stories about literacy growth and barriers to literacy in and out of class to help us respond with relevant activities

How: teachers reflect and write briefly about an agreed upon number of learners. We use our reading groups since it works out to be about the same number of students in each group.

When: logs are done as soon as possible after the class ends, but sometimes that means doing the logs at home or on the next day before planning the day's classes

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TEACHER'S LOG: OBSERVATIONS & REFLECTIONS

LEARNER/DATE:	WHAT HAPPENED?	IDEAS RE: WHAT NEXT?

Learning Log

What: a log or journal in which learners reflect on their learning for the week by responding to four questions

Why: to provide a format for learners to think about their learning on paper, complain, criticize, feel good about accomplishments, recognize progress, and look ahead to what they'd like to learn next

How: time for writing in learning logs is set aside during the last class period of the week; logs are handed in to teachers who read entries and respond briefly; multiple copies of the log are made and stapled together with cover sheets to make a booklet

When: weekly throughout the class cycle

LEARNING LOG

Name: ______________________________ **Date:** ________________

Something I learned this week:

Something I enjoyed this week:

Something I didn't like this week:

What I want to do next:

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Math Activities Record

What: a plan for learners' math instruction and for noting what got done, how it went, and any ideas for planning math activities for the next session

Why: to aid in planning small group and individual math work and to have a record of learners' math work

How: can be used by the teacher for individual learners or for group; can also be used by learners to help them keep track of goals they have set for themselves

When: before class and at the end of every math session during the cycle

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MATH ACTIVITIES RECORD

Name: ______________________ **Class Time:** ____________

MATH ACTIVITIES PLAN/DATE:	WHAT HAPPENED:

Writing Progress Checklist*

What: form to assess various aspects of writing development, both in terms of skills and self-concept

Why: to provide a coherent, comprehensive picture of a writer's progress for the learner and for teachers to assess individual and group needs for mini-lessons

How: can be used by teacher after looking at a writer's dialogue journal and writing folder and shared with learner afterwards, or filled out with the learner

When:-after a few weeks of class or when the learner has been writing for three to four weeks; repeated and results are compared at end of cycle

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*Adapted and expanded from Sylvia Greene's Writing and Spelling Progress Sheet from *Basic Literacy Kit* (1989)

Writing Progress Checklist

Name____________________________ **Date** ________________

A. Process:

	Can Do	Needs Work	Not Evident	N/A
1. Generates language experience stories 1.				
2. Able to select topics to write about 2.				
3. Willing to try to put words on paper 3.				
4. Develops a topic with details 4.				
5. Able to use writing for a variety of purposes 5.				
6. Willing to revise 6.				
7. Using feedback from others to revise 7.				
8. Writes entries in dialogue journal 8.				
9. Writes entries in learning log 9.				
10. Willing to share some pieces with others 10.				
11. Gaining confidence in self as a writer 11.				

Comments/Observations:

		Can Do	Needs Work	Not Evident 52	N/A
B. Handwriting:					
1. Prints upper case lower case	1.				
2. Leaves spaces between words	2.				
3. Optional Competency: writes cursive	3				
C. Spelling:					
1. Willing to use invented spelling	1.				
2. Uses personal word dictionary to improve spelling and record sight words	2.				
3. Uses word lists/dictionary/thesaurus to check spelling during editing phase	3.				
4. Writes letter(s) that represent consonant sounds	4.				
5. Writes letters that represent digraphs and blends	5.				
6. Writes letter(s) that represent long vowel sounds:					
a. Uses a_e, ay, ai, to make long a sound	6a.				
b. Uses ee, ea, to make long e sound	b.				
c. Uses i_e, igh, y, to make long i	c.				
d. Uses o_e, oa, oe, ow, to make long o sound	d.				
e. Uses u_e, ue, to make long u	e.				
7. Writes letters to represent short vowel sounds	7.				
8. Applies the following spelling rules:					
a. -ff, -ll, -ss, -zz	8a.				
b. -k or -ck, -ch or tch, -ge or dge	b.				

		Can Do	Needs Work	Not Evident	N/A
9. Uses "to, too, and two" correctly	9.				
10. Uses "there, their, they're" correctly	10.				
11. Other homonyms used correctly (list them):	11.				
12. Note any spelling error patterns observed:	12.				
D. Mechanics:					
1. Proofreads first drafts	1.				
2. Writes in complete sentences	2.				
3. Uses end punctuation correctly	3.				
4. Uses editing symbols to revise and edit personal writing	4.				
5. Uses capital letters to:					
a. Begin a sentence	5a.				
b. Name people, places and special things	b.				
c. Capitalize the major words in a title	c.				
6. Uses commas to separate items in a list	6.				
7. Uses "_____" around the words people say out loud	7.				
8. Goes down to a new line and indents when beginning a new paragraph	8.				
9. Uses an apostrophe to show possession	9.				
10. Uses an apostrophe to make a contraction	10.				
11. Uses verbs in the correct tense	11.				

12. Note any other skills writer
has developed:

Writing Process Checklist

What: form that takes writers and teachers through steps of writing process to be used by learners, teachers, and tutors with particular writing pieces

Why: to encourage and reinforce independence in using the process approach to writing

How: introduced in group, used individually and stapled to drafts of piece being worked on; learners use independently or with assistance, as needed

When: used with most longer writings that go through all stages of writing process, especially for new students, tutors, and earlier class cycles when process writing is not familiar

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Writing Process Checklist

Name:____________________ Title:____________________________

* Check off each item on the list after you do it.

1. After you write your first draft, read it over to yourself. _____

2. Make any changes you think are needed. _____

3. Read your piece to someone else so they can help you revise. _____

4. Make any changes you think are needed to make your piece clearer. _____

5. Read the piece over again yourself, this time to look for things you need to edit.

   Is your story in the order that you want it to be? ______

   Do you have complete sentences? ______

   Do you have capital letters where you need them? ______

   Do you have the punctuation you need? (.) (?) (!) ______

   Write the words you want to check the spelling of here:

____

____

____

____

6. Read the piece to someone else and use an Editing Checklist. _______

7. You may want to share the piece with others. _______

8. Make a final copy _______

Writing Conference Record

What: a form to keep track of what happens with an individual learner during informal writing conferences

Why: to maintain a cumulative, working record of skills worked on by each learner

How: teacher writes brief notes after writing conference or other significant interaction with learner during writing time; form is stapled to learners' writing folders

When: each time teacher or tutor works with learner individually on particular writing skills; cumulative records become part of learners' assessment portfolios

WRITING CONFERENCE RECORD

Writer's Name: ______________________________

Title: **Skills Worked On:** **Date:**

Spelling Self-Test

What: a form to help learners focus on a reasonable number of words to study and test themselves on, if desired

Why: to meet learners' need to focus on spelling improvement by providing a format to encourage learners to select words to learn to spell from their own writing

How: learners use forms independently, sometimes in conjunction with group lessons on ways to study spelling; learners may have another learner "test" them by dictating their words to them; correct spellings are copied on left hand list, then folded over for self-test on the right side; learner checks own work by by unfolding the page

When: depends on learners' needs; usually, lists of seven or fewer words are studied for a week; form used as needed

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SPELLING SELF-TEST

Name: ______________________ Date: __________________

WORDS FROM PERSONAL DICTIONARY/ WRITING:	SELF-TEST:
1. ____________________________	1. ______________________
2. ____________________________	2. ______________________
3. ____________________________	3. ______________________
4. ____________________________	4. ______________________
5. ____________________________	5. ______________________
6. ____________________________	6. ______________________
7. ____________________________	7. ______________________

Dialogue Journals

What: simple yet powerful tools for developing learners' confidence and literacy skills; a great way for teachers and learners to get to know each other. Dialogue journals are, as their name implies, a conversation on paper between two people.

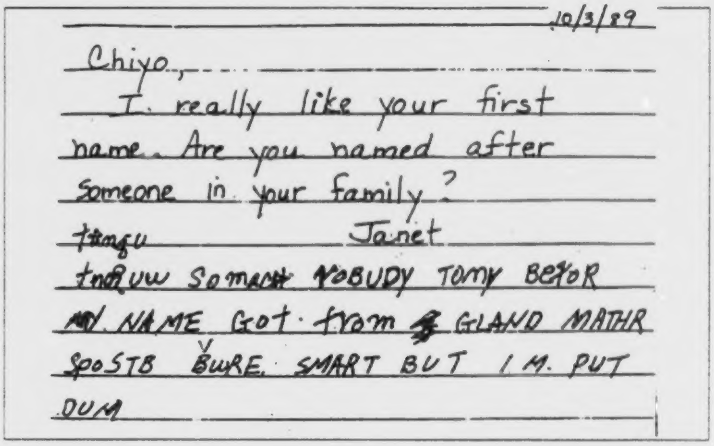
Why: to provide an opportunity for reading and writing for communication; to act as a "warm-up" to writing in the sense that no judgements or corrections are made. Despite the lack of editing, journal entries over time almost always show progressive development toward more conventional spelling, punctuation, and grammar. This is probably due to many factors, one of which may be the teachers's modelling of conventional spelling, etc. Dialogue journals are also places where issues and problems that are bothering learners can be safely aired and not lost in the shuffle.

How: journals are made of lined paper stapled together with colored paper covers. Each teacher writes to a group of learners, ending the entry with a question for the learner to respond to in writing. Journals are left in students' mailboxes. Learners read their journals on their own if they can, get help with the reading if needed, and respond in writing with teacher's help if needed. Learners are asked to end their entries with a question for the teacher and put the journals in teachers' mailboxes.

When: can be incorporated into any program at any time. We use the first 20 minutes or so of each class period for dialogue journals since there are often latecomers and journal writing is an individual activity. It also works as a good "warm up" activity for further reading and writing. Teachers respond in the journals before the next class; this sometimes means taking the journals home. We rotate the groups of learners which teachers write to every eight weeks or so.

Sample of a dialogue journal.

This first entry is from the first day of class.



10/3/89

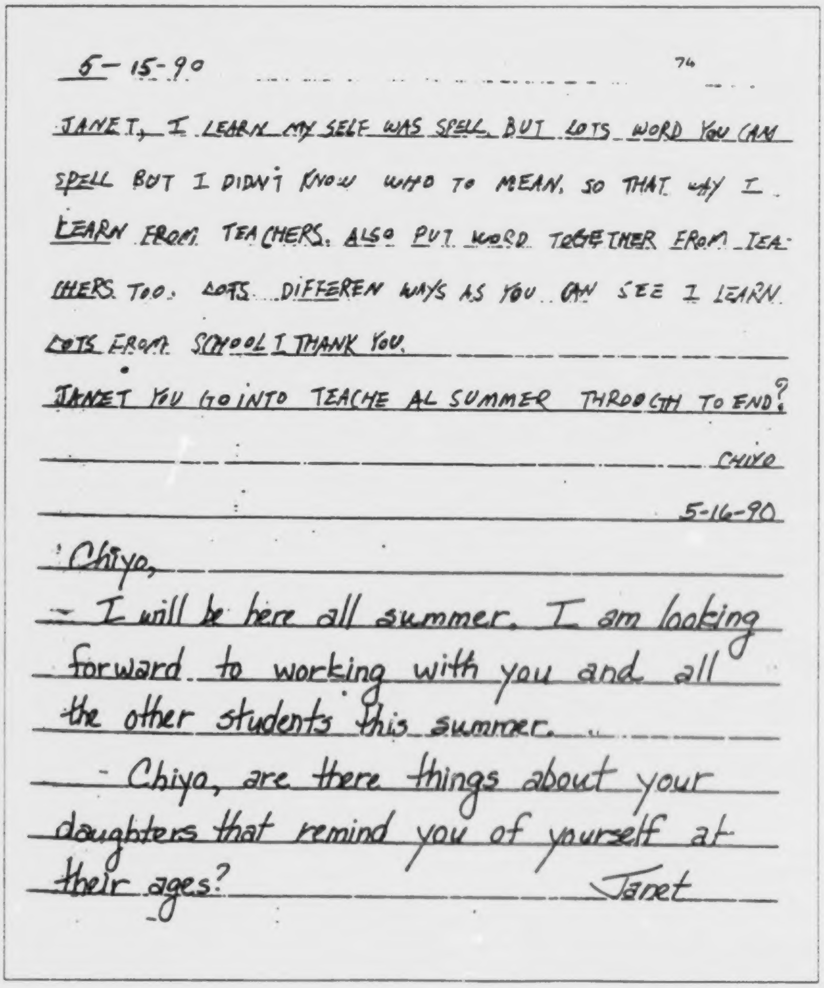
Chiyo,

I really like your first name. Are you named after Someone in your family?

~~thangu~~ Janet

thaQuw Somach NOBUDY TOMY BEFOR MY NAME Got from GLAND MATHR SpoSTB BuRE. SMART BUT I M. PUT DUM

This entry is from a class about six and a half months later.



5-15-90 74

JANET, I LEARN MY SELF WAS SPELL. BUT LOTS WORD YOU CAN SPELL BUT I DIDN'T KNOW WHO TO MEAN. SO THAT WAY I LEARN FROM TEACHERS. ALSO PUT WORD TOGETHER FROM TEACHERS TOO. LOTS DIFFEREN WAYS AS YOU CAN SEE I LEARN LOTS FROM SCHOOL I THANK YOU.

JANET YOU GO INTO TEACHE AL SUMMER THROOGTH TO END?

CHIYO

5-16-90

Chiyo,

I will be here all summer. I am looking forward to working with you and all the other students this summer.

Chiyo, are there things about your daughters that remind you of yourself at their ages?

Janet

Janet Kelly is an ABE literacy teacher and project director at Read/Write/Now in Springfield.

Note

All of the materials included in this article, as well as other curricuulum materials, can also be found in the ABE Language Arts Curriculum Kit sponsored by SABES. The 0-4 Kit is available through the SABES Regional Support Centers at Holyoke Community College (Holyoke), Quinsigamond Community College (Worcester), Bristol Community College (Fall River), Northern Essex Community College (Lawrence), and the Adult Literacy Resource Institute (Boston).

Self-Assessment: Doing and Reflecting

Paul Trunnel

This article focuses on self-assessment and the activation of the learner. A major assumption behind self-assessment is that learners are capable of evaluating themselves, that they have explicit goals, and that a process of self-evaluation will make them more motivated and aware of their own learning process. This process can make learning more meaningful and encourage learners to become active in shaping their own learning environment.

The Context

The Harborside Community Center, in East Boston, provides free ABE and ESL classes to an increasingly diverse population, including Latinos, Cambodians, Vietnamese, Jamaicans, Cape Verdeans, and native born North Americans (many of Italian descent).

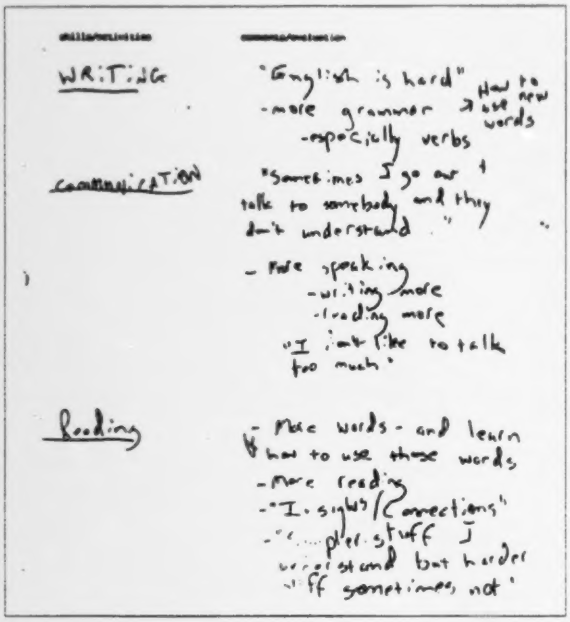
The ABE 2 class that I teach has about sixteen students and serves as the pre-GED and pre-EDP course. About half the students are native English speakers. The class meets three times a week to study reading, writing, and math. The diversity of skill levels in the class makes it a kind of one-room schoolhouse: a few students have reading difficulties; many of the students have language issues specific to learning English as a second language; a few students will soon be taking their GED's or enrolling in the EDP class. Students stay in my class anywhere from three to 18 months.

Much of the assessment that takes place at Harborside falls into the "alternative" category. At the school's Open House, prospective ABE students place themselves in classes. Learning questionnaires, a self-evaluatory math sheet, self-selected reading and writing activities, and discussions with teaching staff help learners through this process. (APPENDIX 2) In the ABE 2 classroom we use goals surveys and activities, learning behavior questionnaires, learning contracts, and regular conferences to assess needs and determine progress.

All of the different assessment tools that we use have developed through a process of trial and error. My goal has always been to fit the activity to the learning needs and styles of the students, and also to my own teaching style. I think this process of experimentation is vital. The manner in which we assess ourselves and the questions which we ask strongly influence what we study and how we study. The activities that I discuss in this article--the skills evaluation sheet and the learning log--are two of the first alternative assessment activities that I tried in my class. Their development exemplifies this process of experimentation.

Developing the Skills Evaluation Sheet

The skills evaluation activity evolved while I was looking for an ongoing assessment tool I could use with the whole class. At the time, I didn't have anything other than some goals-oriented activities



WRITING

"English is hard"
-more grammer → How to use new words
-especially verbs

COMMUNICATION

"Sometimes I go out + talk to somebody and they don't understand"
- more speaking
-writing more
-reading more
"I don't like to talk too much"

Reading

- More words - and learn how to use those words
-More reading
-"I. [illegible]/Corrections"
-"...pler stuff I understand but harder stuff sometimes not"

FIGURE 1

which seemed too individualized to do as a class. Using the suggestions of Nunan (1988) and Auerbach (1990) as my guides, I sketched out several different sheets, with successively fewer and fewer instructions because my class was impatient with long-winded explanations.

The final form was an almost blank piece of paper with just enough information, I hoped, to point an uncertain learner in the right direction. The inspiration had come from the forms and ideas of Nunan and Auerbach, but the final version was tailor-made for my class. (FIGURE 1, APPENDIX 3)

My goal was to keep the form and the activity from being "top-heavy." This seems to be the case with many of the forms and activities that I have read in alternative assessment literature. This is not meant to be a mark against these forms; I simply mean that learner centered education needs to be student and context specific. For me this means that much of the material on the forms that have inspired me seems irrelevant to my ABE 2 class and its members.

Using the Skills Evaluation Sheet

When I first handed out the skills evaluation sheet, I explained what the columns were for. The skills column, I said, is for making a list of all the different skills and activities we have done since the last time we evaluated. These may include fractions, subtraction, learning how to use commas, writing essays on learning, a trip to the library, etc. Much of what is included in this column may be specialized because of the individual learning projects of many students. Then, as a class, we made a list on the board, covering as specifically as possible (e.g., "fraction reducing" or "fraction subtraction" instead of just "fractions") all the skills and activities we had done.

The second evaluation column, I explained, is to put what students think about the different activities and skills we have covered. I usually need to explain what I mean by evaluation. For starters, we talk about different systems or words we can use to evaluate. For example, a 1 - 5 best to worst listing; or, I learned it/I need more; or more specialized responses, such as "I liked it but I don't remember it too much." I leave this up to the student, rather than providing the system or the words, because I am interested in individualized answers. Also, each student has the opportunity to choose a different system, which empowers them and gives them the opportunity to explore evaluation methods that best suit them.

Then, we proceed to the back page. I ask the learners, now that they've listed and commented on all of these items, to identify a few that they feel they have learned and/or they still want to study.

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Also, I tell them to include other subjects they might want to touch on in the future.

Throughout the activity of filling out the sheets, we discuss, as a group, the different skills, activities, and systems that we come up with. This ussually leads us to conclude with a good, affirming sense of what we've accomplished, as well as a less muddled vision of what we are going to continue studying and where we will go next.

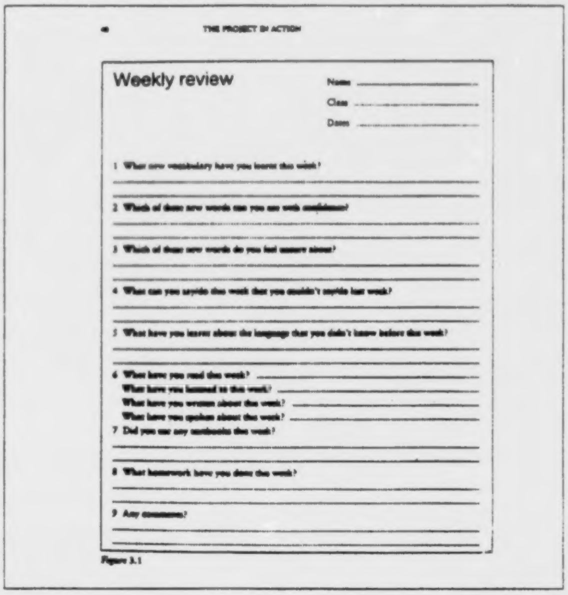
Some students, particularly those who advocate more traditional methods of assessment and learning, have write very little; but, the class discussion seems to involve them effectively. A few students surprised me in their comments about areas they hoped to review—areas I thought they had a firm grasp on. Overall it seemed that the form accomplished the goal of focusing the class for the remainder of the cycle.

After the exercise, I asked students what they thought of it. In general, they liked it. One student suggested we do it every month; other students agreed. I suggested that we do it once a week, but the students thought that would be too often. Another student, said, "You already know what I know. What's the use?" I explained that I didn't know all he knew; and particularly, I had no idea about how he thought he was doing. I told him that was important to me.

All in all, the sheet seems effective in assessing group progress and encouraging students to reflect on their individual progress. It allows me to see what was effective, popular, or not and works very well in telling us where we need to go next.

...As they develop, journals provide concrete evidence of students' progress. Teachers can evaluate them in terms of criteria like range of topics/content, elaboration of ideas (including use of details, examples, depth of analysis, emotional force, etc.), length of entries, grammatical development (specific forms like tense markers, fragments, etc.) and coherence as well as students' own perspective on their learning. Students can use them for self-evaluation by reading and responding to the finished products, noting changes and areas needing work. (Auerbach)

FIGURE 2


48 THE PROJECT IN ACTION

Weekly review

Name
Class
Dates

1 What new vocabulary have you learnt this week?

2 Which of these new words can you use with confidence?

3 Which of these new words do you feel unsure about?

4 What can you say/do this week that you couldn't say/do last week?

5 What have you learnt about the language that you didn't know before this week?

6 What have you read this week?
What have you listened to this week?
What have you written about this week?
What have you spoken about this week?

7 Did you use any textbooks this week?

8 What homework have you done this week?

9 Any comments?

Figure 3.1

FIGURE 3

This device is intensive and comprehensive enough that we will use it maybe once every four to six weeks, as a good grounding activity for the class. In the future, I might have learners use their progress portfolios as a means to inspire the list, instead of prompting. This way, as well, a more personalized list may develop.

Developing the Learning Log

While the skills evaluation sheet was a helpful tool for seeing progress over a month or six weeks, I still wanted an activity for more frequent self-assessment. I adapted an idea for a weekly learning log from the weekly progress sheets suggested by Nunan and Auerbach and the weekly reviews suggested by Lawson. (FIGURE 2 and 3). A learning log is a good example of immediate self-assess-

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ment. Students are asked, at certain intervals--daily or weekly--to reflect and record in writing what they have learned. Learning logs can serve many purposes.

As dialogue journals: Students who are less comfortable with writing are given a purpose and encouragement to put their thoughts into words in a less threatening manner. The writing can be treated as a dialogue, meaning that what students write down will be responded to.

As classroom ritual: Once every week or two weeks, or after particular events, students can count on this method as a means of evaluating their experience. By making it a regular event, it becomes endowed with greater authority, and in this instance, that authority is bestowed on learners' reflections. In this way, the learning logs become a respected means of evaluation, in place of an exam or paper.

As a review: Students may write about specific ideas or terms they have learned. Again this may substitute for a quiz, or be used as a study notebook for one. Often adult students are not in the habit of keeping notebooks or organizing their learning materials. Journals can help sort things out. Also, at least in my class, the learning we do is often extemporaneous: a student might ask, "What is area?" and a twenty minute lesson in area will follow. Learning logs can be the place to record some of those concepts.

As a question-and-answer period: Students may choose to ask their teacher questions in the log about a subject, or about the class in general, that they might not have time to ask in class. The reverse is true: I can ask the students questions about whether or not they understand something. I may not have had time during the lesson to find out where everyone was; or I may just prefer a more private means of communication.

Again, I changed the format to fit my teaching style and the needs of the class. The ESL-oriented questions, for example, "what new words have I learned this week?" seemed inappropriate for the level of my class. In fact, I chose to eliminate all the questions: I still wanted to explore the possibilities of a loosely-directed task, rather than a more structured task like a questionnaire. It was my hope that, by simply giving them a book and asking them to write about their learning, their entries would be more self-exploratory and therefore more valuable to the students and to me.

Using the Learning Log

I began using learning logs at the end of math class. I asked students to record in a little blue exam book what work they had done and if they had any questions. The purpose was two-fold: first, I wanted a specific record of the work they had been doing; second, I wanted to start using this as a learning log/ dialogue journal. The entries varied in interest and information provided:

> "Number Power 2, pg. 34"
>
> "Today I worked on my multiplying and carrying."
>
> "I done OK some of them."
>
> "I worked on fractions page 84 (book) Building Basic Skills in Math. I am doing alright But I need some help to get going.
>
> "I started today, doing integers. I understand it pretty much. While I was Brushing up on them, I had some trouble in doing the fractions. I would like to start learning the fractions next week. I will need some great deal of help on them. Thanks."

Only the last two learners seem to be fully engaged in the idea of the learning log. However, there is value in even the abbreviated responses. Obviously, for some students, the process of writing in the log was language practice. For others, it at least met the first goal of the exercise: creating a record of the work they had done. (FIGURE 4)

The second time I passed the little blue books out, I asked everyone to take a moment and reflect on the learning they had done in the previous week. The entries, I said, could be anywhere from a sentence to whatever length they felt necessary. We took a few minutes to discuss the purpose of the logs. In the discussion, learners brought up issues they had with this approach to assessment: "What do you want us to write? Why? We haven't learned anything. This is a waste of my time." I tried to explain that this was a way of recording progress, and an opportunity to start a dialogue on learning. Yes, it is true that over the last week we have not done much in the way of skills exercises. But, what about the trip to the library? What about the class discussion we had about AIDS?

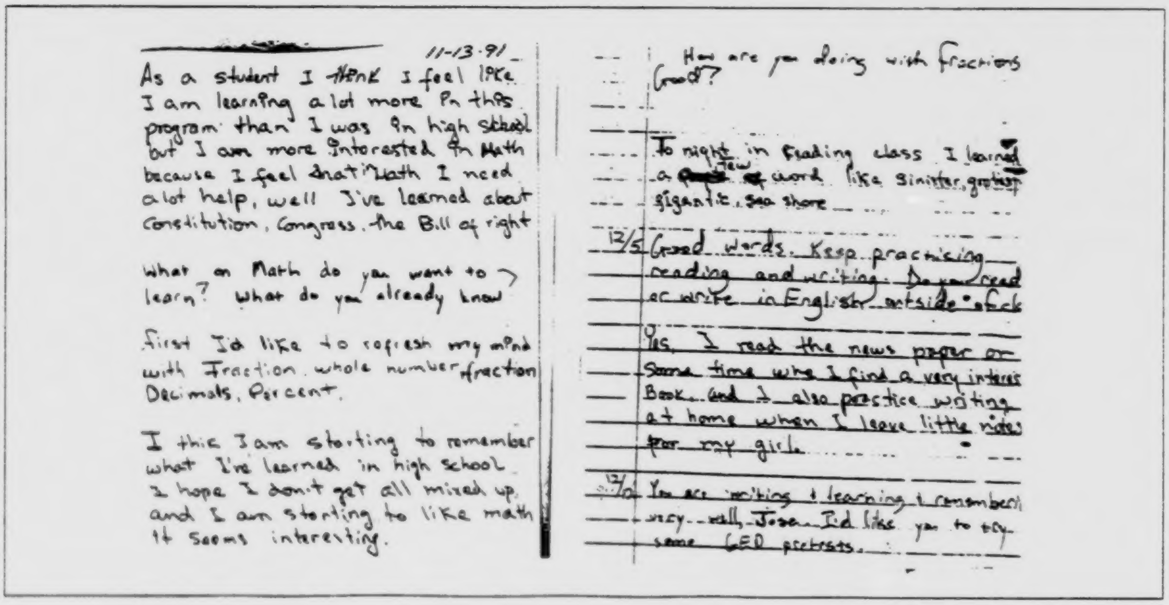
The journals were filled out and turned in mostly with short, unreflective entries such as:

> "We learned about the Constitution about Civil Rights."

But, another student had this to say:

> "As you can tell, it's a bit confusing with integers. But I do understand the basics, as long as it relates to money. Anyhow, during the past week I have been learning on my own, on fractions. I think so far I'm doing good considering I had no clue what was going on with fractions. The workbook you have let me borrow (Number Power 2) is quite helpful and easy to understand step by step. If I need your help I'll let you know."

Later, I had a conversation with the student who wrote only one sentence. We talked about how



11-13-91

As a student I ~~think~~ I feel like
I am learning a lot more in this
program than I was in high school
but I am more interested in Math
because I feel that Math I need
alot help, well I've learned about
Constitution, Congress, the Bill of right

What on Math do you want to
learn? What do you already know

first I'd like to refresh my mind
with Fraction, whole number, fraction
Decimals, Percent.

I thic I am starting to remember
what I've learned in high school
I hope I don't get all mixed up.
and I am starting to like math
it seems interesting.

How are you doing with fractions
Good?

To night in reading class I learned
a ~~[illegible]~~ few ~~of~~ word like sinister, grotesq
gigantic, sea shore

12/5 Good words. Keep practicing
reading and writing. Do you read
or write in English outside of clc

Yes, I read the news paper or
Some time whe I find a very interes
Book. and I also practice writing
at home when I leave little notes
for my girl.

12/12 You are writing & learning & remembering
very well, Jose. I'd like you to try
some GED pretests.

FIGURE 4

limited class hours were and how there was only so much—skills-related or otherwise—that we could cover. She felt the class discussions we had had about the constitution, about drugs, and about AIDS were not learning. I took this as a cue that I should connect our discussions more firmly with the skills she wants and needs to achieve her GED. But she also acknowledged her impatience as a source of frustration and told me that she took an hour or two at home every night to do work in her workbook. In the following class, she made a suggestion pertaining to math class that was helpful and thoughtful, and which we put into immediate use. Finally, a few days later, when she was having difficulty with her math, she said, "Give me my learning log, I'm having a hard time." So, even her frustration—and my frustration with her frustration—had a silver lining.

In the future, I hope to make using learning logs a regular "ritual" in the classroom as Lawson (1988) and Auerbach (1990) have recommended. At the end of every week, or even every day, we could take five or ten minutes to reflect on the learning we have done over the week. At the end of the week we might take a few minutes to plan out some goals for the week to come. Also, since some students had difficulty with the lack of structure of the assignment, I might re-introduce some of the questions provided by Auerbach, Lawson, and Nunan.

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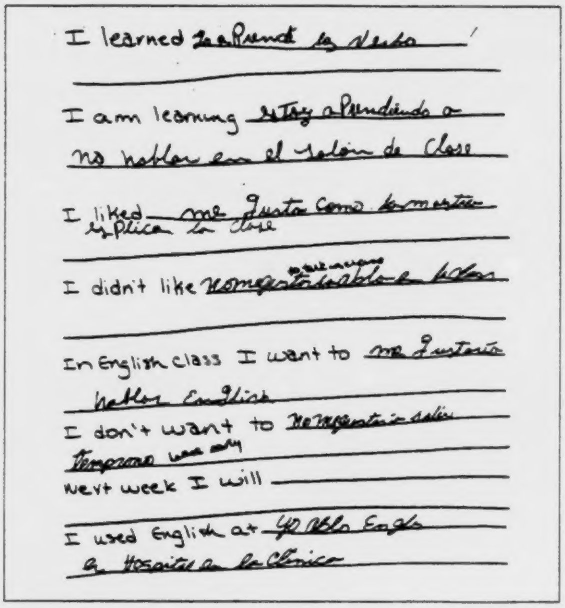
When Asking Isn't Enough

Kathy Brucker

This year I tested a variety of evaluation tools with my level one Spanish-speaking students at El Centro del Cardenal in Boston. These evaluations were based on our class lessons, but they could be adjusted for any class and used at any time.

First Evaluation

The first evaluation was completed by students at the end of the first week of classes. I gave the students 20 minutes and provided activities for those who finished early. (FIGURE 1)



I learned la aPrendi la [illegible]

I am learning Estoy aPrendiendo a no hablar en el Salon de Clase

I liked me Gusta como la maestra esPlica la clase

I didn't like no me gusta hablar en Clase

In English class I want to me Gustaria hablar English

I don't want to No me gusta salir temprano was early

next week I will

I used English at yo hablo Engls a Hospital a la Clinica

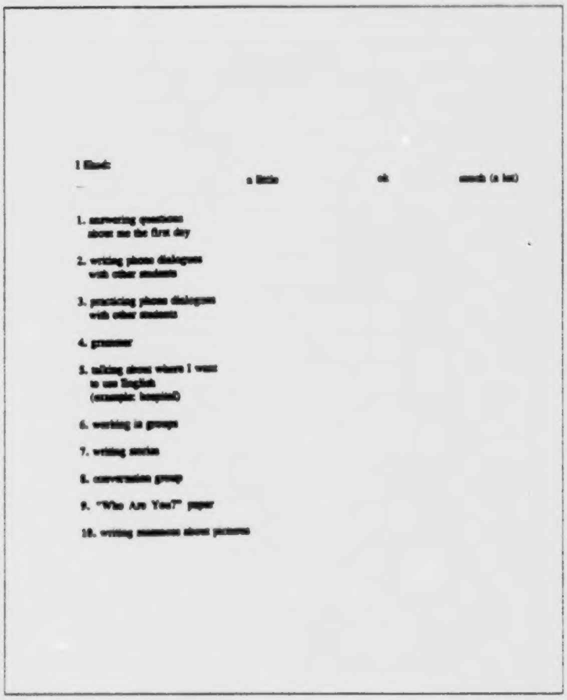
FIGURE 1

I encouraged the students to answer this evaluation in Spanish. Although I don't read Spanish well, I can always find a staff person or another teacher to translate for me. This extra step is worth my time because students can give me "true," that is to say, more accurate and more complete answers, using their first language. They feel freer to express themselves and let me know what they want. It also gives me a sense of the students' native language competency. This is important in order for me to understand where students are starting. I ask students to identify themselves on the assessment so that I can find out if someone is uncomfortable with certain activities, such as going to the board, reading out loud, being on videotape, or working with partners.

Second Evaluation

The next type of evaluation I used helped students identify which activities they had enjoyed and found useful and which they had not. This was done a week later (two weeks into the cycle) and took about one half hour. (FIGURE 2)

I used the headings "a little," "ok," and "much (a lot)," because this is language the students know and can read. I also displayed



I liked:

	a little	ok	much (a lot)
1. answering questions about me the first day			
2. writing phone dialogues with other students			
3. practicing phone dialogues with other students			
4. grammar			
5. talking about where I want to use English (example: hospital)			
6. working in groups			
7. writing stories			
8. conversation group			
9. "Who Are You?" paper			
10. writing sentences about pictures			

FIGURE 2

examples of each activity mentioned in case students had trouble connecting the written description with the activity.

The problem with this evaluation was that it didn't give me enough direction. Because everyone had different opinions, it was hard to integrate all individual tastes. One way I would amend the second evaluation is by adding the following questions:

- **Which did you enjoy? Why?**
- **Which part helped you remember English?**
- **Which didn't you enjoy? Why?**

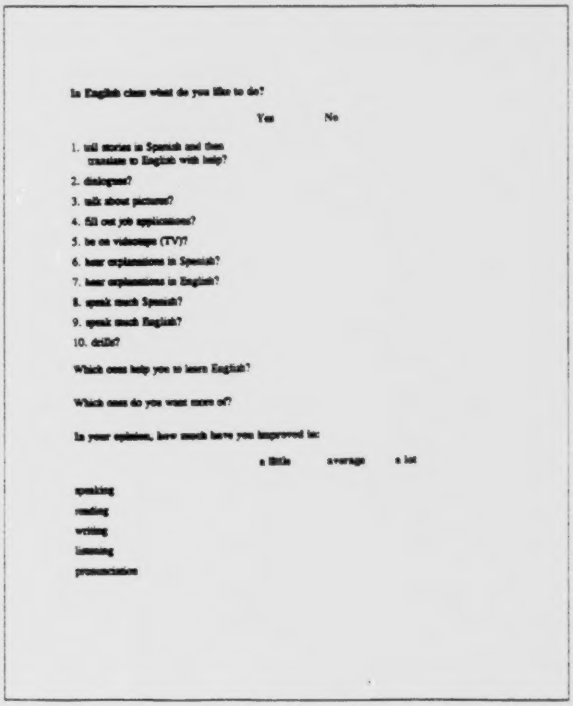
I think these questions would provide better feedback because they ask students to reflect on why they enjoy certain activities and why they don't enjoy others. This would give me a better sense of what activities are useful and, at the same time, help students reflect on their learning styles.

Third Evaluation

The next evaluations incorporated some learning strategies to encourage critical thinking and students taking control of their own learning. This evaluation took students up to one hour to understand and complete. (FIGURE 3)

Most of the answers were predictable: they liked learning with pictures and having conversations in English. But, there were surprises, like the student who said he only wanted to speak and hear English, yet never spoke English in the classroom and often asked for translations.

Part of the third evaluation was taken from El



In English class what do you like to do?

	Yes	No
1. tell stories in Spanish and then translate to English with help?		
2. dialogues?		
3. talk about pictures?		
4. fill out job applications?		
5. be on videotape (TV)?		
6. hear explanations in Spanish?		
7. hear explanations in English?		
8. speak much Spanish?		
9. speak much English?		
10. drills?		

Which ones help you to learn English?

Which ones do you want more of?

In your opinion, how much have you improved in:

	a little	average	a lot
speaking			
reading			
writing			
listening			
pronunciation			

FIGURE 3

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Centro's teacher evaluation that all students complete at the end of each cycle. I like to include this section to see how students rate themselves on the same type of scale as they rate the teacher. Because there is a point in each cycle when students question whether they are making progress, I also like to include statements that help them consider how much they've learned. In addition to helping students see what we have covered, this evaluation gives them the opportunity to request individual or class reviews of particular activities.

Subsequent biweekly evaluations were formatted with the addition of new activities. I found this format the most accessible to the students and the one we could draw useful conclusions from the most.

Final Evaluation

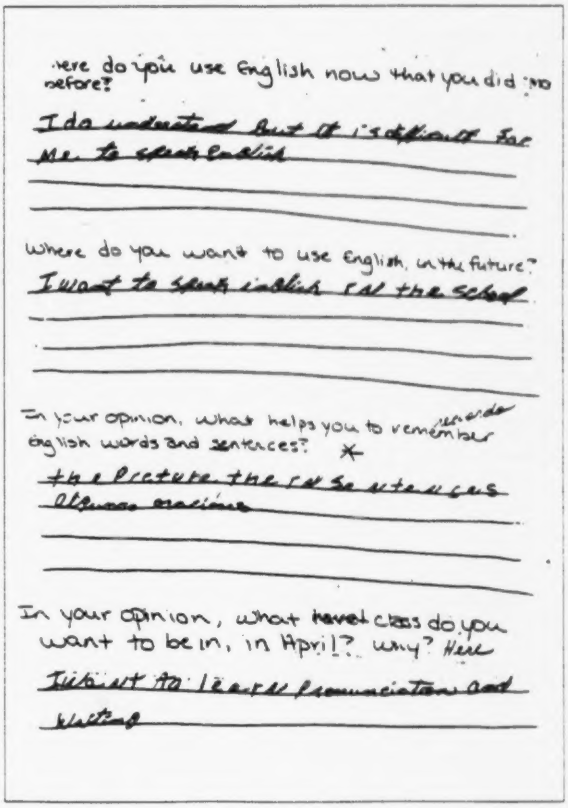
The final evaluation was done in English. I had assumed the students would use Spanish, but when I gave them the evaluation, they started writing in English; of course, I didn't stop them! I instructed them not to sign the evaluation if they wished not to be identified. Students spent from one to one and a half hours on this evaluation. (FIGURE 4)

I included a question to help the students begin to think about their learning strategies. I hoped that this evaluation would enable the students to tell their next teachers how they best learn and in what ways the teacher could help them. Next time, I plan to introduce the idea of learning strategies early in the cycle so that students can experiment with learning styles throughout our time together.

Analyzing Our Learning

I find evaluations very helpful. In addition to the roles they can play as described above, I now also use them to promote discussions about tensions people are feeling in the classroom. For example, working with a homogeneous language group I find people disagreeing on how much native language or English should be used. I read in evaluations the frustrations students are feeling about anything from having enough English conversation in class to personal problems with neighbors. Using the evaluation as a code to promote discussion enables me not only to introduce new phrases and vocabulary to students but also provides an opportunity to have them role play situations they want to discuss.

I like to know which lessons are successful and which are not, and what studetns consider improtant or enjoyable. Most of the time, asking isn't enough. I find that writing about our learning helps us



ere do you use English now that you did no
before?

I do understand But it is difficult for me to speak English

Where do you want to use English in the future?

I want to speak inglish [illegible] the school

In your opinion, what helps you to remember English words and sentences? *

the Picture the [illegible] sentences Algunas oraciones

In your opinion, what ~~level~~ class do you want to be in, in April? why? Here

I like it to learn Pronunciation and writing

FIGURE 4

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analyze it. Evaluations give the students input and control over their classroom. They help people structure their thoughts and discover *if* they're learning, *what* they're learning, *how* they're learning, and finally, *why* they're learning.

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What You See: Ongoing Assessment in the ESL/Literacy Classroom

Janet Isserlis

This essay describes ongoing action research[1] on how adult ESL/ literacy learners progress in and out of the classroom. Its purpose is to describe ways in which facilitators understand and describe learning and work with adults to increase their awareness of how they learn. It is my hope that sharing these thoughts with other literacy practitioners may encourage them to adapt, expand, and further develop these ideas in ways that make sense within their own contexts.

Background

With the current widespread focus on assessment--as with every educational trend--the potential for growth as well as abuse exists. (Think about empowering learners through a basal whole language series and understand how contradictions develop in the name of commerce.) Publishers have begun to jump on the progressive assessment bandwagon and have commodified "new" assessment practices. Nonetheless, one very positive outcome in this recent resurgence of attention to assessment is its bringing to awareness real links between assessment and learning.

Assessment is observation and asking questions. The reports we send to funders are related to the outcomes of some of those questions but are removed to some extent from the everyday business of working in a classroom. Assessment is interwoven in this daily work in obvious as well as subtle ways. When a learner says, "I don't understand," we know that she needs more information or needs to have something rephrased or re-explained. This kind of spontaneous evaluation of a learner's needs is the most obvious form of ongoing assessment. When another learner consistently asks questions about grammar over a period of time, we also learn something about that learner's thinking and learning processes and possibly about that learner's previous experience with formal education. When a learner always copies everything from the blackboard, breaks lines in her notebook in exactly the same way as they're broken on the board (even if she has enough space in her notebook not to break the lines), we learn something about how she understands print.

The assessment questions we ask range from the very broad to the very specific. Broader questions frame our thinking about how we know what we know about learning, but they are not particularly helpful without specific, local questions about particular learners in concrete contexts. We might begin by asking what we mean by assessment. Assessment of what? of whom? When does this assessment occur and why? If we decide that we assess learners to satisfy funders, then we remove learning from the equation to some degree. We want to be able to show the people who pay us that their money is being well spent. So, at worst, we may teach to a standardized test, showing low pre-

and high post- test scores. We may tell learners that this is just a test, and work towards it "on the side" but use the rest of our valuable classroom time on "real" learning and teaching. In other instances we may try to educate funders and tell them that we use portfolio assessment--that we look at learners' progress over time in various areas--through dialogue journals, writing samples, and taped readings done at various intervals during the course of a program. We may ask learners to report on their own progress and document their responses to surveys we conduct throughout the year. Or we may use any combination of the above.

These are product-oriented views of assessment, and the concerns of funders are very real problems. Nonetheless, for this discussion, I would like to set aside these funders and their needs and return to learners and theirs.

Assessment Every Day

Ongoing assessment has to do with classroom activity that occurs continuously. Such ongoing assessment has less to do with written reports and far more to do with the interactive, dynamic, dialogic roles of both teachers and learners. It has to do with responding to learners' questions every day and with actively noting the kinds of questions learners ask, the ways in which learners respond to print and oral communications, the kinds of mistakes they make, the ways in which they go about correcting their own mistakes, and the ways in which their classmates might correct them. This kind of ongoing observation and assessment is inseparable from good teaching practice.

In 1988, literacy practitioners at the International Institute of Rhode Island began a process of documenting classroom activity in order to develop a vehicle for recording ongoing assessment.[2] Over time, we came to notice not only what was happening with particular learners but also ways in which to examine, frame, and question ongoing events in general. This process is described at length elsewhere[3]; what emerged from the process has been a heightened awareness on the part of teaching staff of the importance of ongoing critical reflection and interaction with learners. Active observation and attentive listening enable practitioners to go beyond the more evident aspects of learners' progress--e.g., increases in length of journal entries, improvements in spelling--and become more closely aware of the processes through which learners acquire language and literacy.

For Example

To illustrate the kinds of daily interactions and specific instances which teach us about how learners learn, the following anecdotal accounts describe adult ESL/literacy learners and ways in which they help themselves and help me to learn about their learning processes.

Rosalie has been in America for about 18 years. She was born in Haiti and raised in the Bahamas. At present she works as a dishwasher. She came to class with the ability to speak and understand English and to write her name. She knew the names of the letters of the alphabet but had no strong sense of sound/symbol correspondence. Even five to seven line language experience activities (LEA) seemed to overwhelm her. She could "read" the stories at the blackboard after several other learners had read them--she was able to memorize much of the passage and was also very willing to ask for assistance when she couldn't decode a word. When learners were reading the typed versions of the previous day's LEA, I gave Rosalie different colored highlighter pens, asking her to highlight all the "b" words in one color, all the same words in another ("and", "name," etc.). Her ability to memorize was evident, for example, when she

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Monday, November 4
16 students/R's daughter

R came back; she still sounds congested and says she's tired. She didn't bring the kids. Reviewing the homework took the entire hour. Everyone read the story aloud--this took us through the first hour. After the break, I asked Yvette to read, which she did, sort of, with everyone of us also reading along. I asked if people thought it was good or not to have each person read a story --because people do fall into chatting to each other when others are reading. Margaret didn't even wait for me to finish asking the question; she was adamant [...]that hearing everyone read helps her--particularly, I think, with pronunciation. She said that was only her belief; no one seemed to express an opposing opinion, but I did suggest that if people didn't want to listen to everyone read that they could do things on their own.

It seems that when we have a particularly guided structure that the energy is up and people are beginning to interact a bit more widely, beyond their immediate tables/spheres of friends.

I asked L to lay off P a little bit; I wasn't particularly heavy handed about it with him but he's teasing her in a way that I think will make her uncomfortable (if it isn't already), calling on her to read, pointing at her, etc. He's being a little intense with her -- behaving differently from the kind of teasing/ sparring he engages in with Rany. I hope this will go away.

More volunteers to write; Yvette even went to copy `yes' from her paper. She did her homework and said she'd done it alone. Most of the handwriting was hers, but some questions had clearly been answered/written by someone else. Marco was trying to tell me that [Yvette] had confused "don't know" with "no," I think, but when I tried to explore that with her there wasn't much recognition/or it didn't seem to be a problem. He's been a concerned classmate/advocate for her. I wrote "I know/I don't know" on the board and we said it in the various languages.

Phuth was copying Y's homework. (He gave it to me again today. He asked, as always, when I looked at it, "Wrong, right?")

Everyone but Phuth had done the homework and P and Panna didn't have it with them--don't know if they'd done it at home or not. This Thursday's homework is all Yang's idea, and it makes for a neat (i.e. self-contained) and pleasant Monday. Maybe starting all together and letting Tues/Wed be a little more individualized is a way to go?

Excerpts from the author's classroom log are included throughout the article.

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misread an entire line out of sequence. In order to work from this strength (her ability to memorize), I asked her to tell me the words she most wanted to be able to read and write and wrote those words in her notebook. Her list included: church, work, husband, children, grandchildren and teacher. Whenever these words appeared, I called her attention to them, hoping to help her develop a sight word vocabulary and, later, to point out the graphaphonic cues she could use. Although she asked for the highlighters when I forgot to bring them to class, it wasn't until I tried making flashcards for her that she really responded.

Rosalie is somewhat atypical as an ESL/literacy learner, because her aural/oral abilities are so strong. She was able to tell me that the flashcards were the best thing for her and that she was making sentences in school and at home to study, copy, and learn. She is also able to provide very important feedback. When another learner helped her, she became confused, but politely accepted his assistance. When he left the room, she told me, "Joe's help is no good." She asked other learners in the class for assistance, but she knew that Joe moves too quickly and too assertively for her. Rosalie can report on her own learning in a way that other ESL learners cannot often do. Although her ability to speak enables us to hasten our process, similar strides can be made with other learners.

Bosilio, a Puerto Rican learner who emigrated to the mainland in 1973, presented himself to the Literacy/ESL Program with the goal of learning to read in Spanish so that he could read the Bible. Bosilio was the only student to arrive during the first week of morning classes, so he was essentially in a private tutorial. I began working with very simple LEA sentences (not stories) in order to enable him to learn sight words like "name" and "nombre." However, during the first two and a half hour session, he made it clear that he wanted to know the alphabet because that was the only way he would learn to read. My explanation that learning the sounds of the letters might be more important than learning their names was not convincing. So, during the second session, we worked hard on drilling vowel sounds (a,e,i,o,u) in Spanish and then working with syllables (e.g., ma, me, mi, mo, mu). This appealed to Bosilio, and he copied pages of similar syllabic drills into his notebook between classes. I tried several times to introduce some meaning, by showing him "so" and "pa" from his lists, and writing sentences like, "Me gusta la sopa." When he heard the sound "si" he recognized it as the "si" in Bosilio. When he saw "si" out of the context of a horizontal list or in the context of a sentence, e.g., "Si, me gusta la sopa, he was unable to recognize it. If he was reading through the vowel/consonant lists and came to, "so" and was unable to recognize it, he would go back to the top of his list (sa, se, si, so, su) and recite it until he came to the sound in question.

Bosilio was able to make connections on the basis of sound more than he was able to relate to visual cues. In the 10 hours we spent together during our first week, he memorized the vowels (in sequence) but was able to retain few whole/sight words. The following week, nine new students entered the class, five Russians and three Hispanics. Two of the Hispanic learners were inappropriately placed in the class; their language and literacy abilities far outstripped the others. Both learners were willing to stay in the class until space in a more advanced class became available. Both also agreed to work with Bosilio on his Spanish reading and writing. By the end of the week, however, Bosilio had decided to leave the class, stating that, although he received some help from the other learners, he did not want to participate in any of the whole class English language reading, writing, or discussion.

Additionally, he was convinced that he would only learn by learning to read Spanish. He was absent the following day; I contacted him with information about a Spanish language literacy class being held on Saturdays. He thanked me for the information and did not return to the Institute.

Bosilio's story challenges assumptions about learners who won't or can't explicitly express their learning goals. Bosilio wanted to learn to read the Bible. His life in the church was of paramount importance to him. He reported that the church and Christ had saved him from a life of alcoholism and womanizing. Clearly, reading the Word was a dominant motivation. Bosilio was receiving some sort of disability assistance and, although he did not discuss the nature of his disability, there was something not quite right affectively in his interaction with me and with others. (His interpersonal interactions, his sense of personal "space" between himself and his interlocutors, and his speech rhythms indicated behavioral differences between Bosilio and other people.) His needs exceeded mere literacy learning (as do many learner's). However, his intractability vis a vis learning even some of the time with people speaking English indicated to me that no amount of cajoling would or necessarily should have persuaded him to contemplate a more open attitude toward learning. In his case, ownership extended beyond actual literacy, per se, to the ways in which he felt he could become literate. Assessment moves beyond noting his ability to copy lists of phonetic drills and into observation of and reflection upon his interactions with other learners, his motivation for learning, and the goals which drove him to seek classes in the first place.

Marines said she wanted to take her GED and was fairly fluent orally. She wanted to pass a licensing test in English to work as a beautician, as she had done in Puerto Rico. She was able to

Tuesday, November 5
15 students/R's daughter

D the volunteer came to visit and became a language experience. I started two sentences, asked W and Y to write, and then they asked him questions as well. Everyone read.

After the break, we finished reading the homework. Not everyone read individually, so that we could get to talking about why people steal--because they need money; need money to buy drugs, are lazy or laid off, or because they're poor or bad. I kept asking why and as we only had about 10 minutes, asked if they wanted to discuss the question tomorrow, which they do.

Y tried to cash a check with Audry; I'll deposit it for her and hope it's OK.

E came late, went to the b/b to read anyway.

P said she'll be out Wednesday and Thursday, because of the wedding.

R's still tired. P and L were early.

communicate adequately in writing, yet she continually made sloppy mistakes--the kinds of errors that I might point out to a learner as they occur repeatedly over time (e.g., spelling errors in high frequency words, misuse of past tense). Because she explicitly stated that she wants to pass a product oriented test, I adapted my style to try to accommodate her needs. I told her that she knows a lot and can write pretty well, but that the test looks for correct grammar, particularly agreement in verb tenses, and the ever-troublesome correct usage of "have" and "has." Nonetheless, she repeatedly worked too quickly and made the same mistakes she had no doubt made for years before coming back to school.

I noticed that Marines was endlessly patient helping other learners and had real strengths as a reader. She enjoyed reading passages from standard ESL reading texts and easily completed the comprehension tests at the end units. How could I help her pass the writing sample of the GED? I needed to continue to ask her about the reading and writing she does outside of school and perhaps to further break down the components of her writing that are problematic--"Let's look at all the verbs in this paragraph; tomorrow we'll talk about the pronouns." Again, assessment was ongoing and fluid, and based around the need expressed by this learner.

Phuth has been coming to class for years. Initially able to only copy and repeat, she developed a sight word vocabulary that enables her to respond to most dialogue journal entries with little assistance from others. She can generate sentences at the blackboard and can help others at the board with spelling questions. She decodes high frequency words with ease, yet, she still needs to develop strategies which will enable her to use context cues more effectively. If she's reading the word "clean" by itself, she'll say, "I forgot, teacher", or "I don't know." Yet, if she wants to tell me that she cleaned her house last weekend, she'll look in her notebook and find the word there so that she can copy it into her journal. Although she has made great strides with print, she still miscopies entire lines of text. Nonetheless, she now provides help to other learners in addition to receiving it herself. She can speak Lao and Cambodian and helps other learners who may not understand a discussion in English. She still copies everything that's written on the blackboard. Her grown children help her at home. Her physical problems (chronic back pain) make employment impossible. For Phuth's needs--to be among people, to have some independence with print and with language--the class seems adequate.

Luis passed his citizenship test and yet realized that he has to continue to study to become more fluent as a reader and writer. His native Portuguese affects his hearing and encoding of words; he writes words as he hears and pronounces them. "I luk a stoa," means I look at the stores. The letters r and h in Portuguese can be interchanged in certain instances, so Luis will occasionally "rave a good weekend." As I listen to his speech, read his words, and learn about his language, I continually adjust the guidance I try to give him so that his reading and writing in English gradually become more fluent.

These observations about learners' daily interaction with print and language have accrued over time. I document what transpires in each class shortly after the class period, noting who asks whom for help, what materials someone might have brought from home, what someone was interested in reading and/or writing during that class period, who volunteered to go to the blackboard to write, who asked for more homework, etc. I make notes of miscues or questions directly on my copy of a particular reading passage, or in a notebook I keep on hand. Over time, when reviewing the notes, I can see what day it was that Rosalie told me she liked flashcards and wanted more, when Tomas decided to bring in Christmas cards from home for us to write to people in the hospital, when it was that Joe was over zealous with Rosalie, when it was that Teresa read through an entire passage without asking for assistance, when it was that Luis began to realize that *r* and *h* are not interchangeable.

I also see more subtle patterns emerge and my own assumptions challenged. I was told that Alice was illiterate and, because she arrived during the middle of a class session, was unable to do more than welcome her and invite her to copy the passage that we were working on. Although she spoke very little English, she was able to decode the story, and I learned that she was literate in French, and was therefore most likely able to make fairly rapid progress, transferring her knowledge of reading from one language to another. She also brought two large Bibles, written in French, giving me a sense of another way in which literacy figures in her life. Her subsequent questions, in French, and gradually in English about my own religious beliefs, and her descriptions of activities at her church, confirmed my suspicion that she is indeed quite literate in French and needs to gain literacy in English in order to find a job.

Yvette, also from Haiti, wants me to sit with her and point out words on her paper as others read aloud. She has virtually no retention of sounds, letters or words, and yet complains if Alice doesn't speak English (Yvette speaks fairly well, if with some difficulty). She comes to class regulary but has a sister do her homework for her. She appears to be motivated to learn. Yet, even when I sit with her for an extended period of time, her attention wanders from the paper. She likes to dictate brief

Wednesday, November 6
11 students/R's daughter

We began with a small group, so I decided to give them their journals first, which took us through the first hour. K didn't want to write in a journal. R said that he had a lot of homework. He did a beautiful drawing as well, but he kept it.

Everyone was pretty well engaged with the journals. Y copied my questions to her--even after M had read the questions to her--doing her book before his own. I read them to her, solicited her answers and wrote her responses in her notebook so that she could copy them into her bluebook later.

L was intensely absorbed in the journal and asked for virtually no help. P came in late, and unseen, and only after someone pointed out her presence did I see her, give her her book.

After the break, we read the write up of DJ's visit and started talking about the questions, which we'll finish tomorrow. W Y actually completed the questions; not too many people had gotten to writing them yet.

stories to me which she then copies into her notebook. The notebook has entries that begin at the top of a page and other entries that begin at the bottom of a page. She doesn't appear to know that print and books go from left to right. Yet, unless she's working overtime, she's in class early every night.

Although she constantly says that she can't read, other learners always include her when they go to the board to read. (One learner reads and then asks another, etc.) The other learners are patient and help her as she "reads" what she remembers and what they tell her the words say. Her progress will be very slow. As I learn more about the kinds of literacy activities that appeal to her, I hope to be able to find better ways to facilitate that progress.

What Does It Mean?

The point of sharing these observations and vignettes is to show that ongoing assessment is exactly what it claims to be--a process of observation, reflection, and feedback aimed at assisting learners[4] and facilitators. Through systematic documentation of classroom activity and subsequent reflection about learner progress, as well as explicit talk with learners, I try to continually adjust and individualize the facilitating work I do in the classroom so that learners can find better and more appropriate means of learning. Periodic pencil/ paper surveys are part of this process, (APPENDIX 4) as are explicit questions asked now and again of particular learners: "Do you like working together with other people? Did you like writing about the photographs? What would you like to work on today? Why do you think this is easy and that is difficult?"

Finally, ongoing assessment is a part of the learning process. The forms that assessment reports may take--in-house files, funders' reports, reports written for, by, or with learners--will depend on the reasons for which they are written. For myself, as a practitioner, the most important piece is the process itself--the ongoing learning, rethinking, reflection needed for facilitating learning for others and for myself.

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Notes

1. Action research is a process through which one systematically examines what happens in the classroom, reflects upon activity and subsequently modifies that activity in order to improve teaching practice. In a larger context, action research describes collaborative investigative processes through which to enact social change.

2. For more on documenting progress see Lenore Balliro, *Reassessing Assessment in Adult ESL/Literacy*, (Paper presented at TESOL, San Antonio, 1989), p. 35. The paper provides an excellent overview of assessment and is available through ERIC.

3. Collignon, Isserlis, and Smith. *A Handbook for Practitioners: ESL/Literacy for Adult Non-native Speakers of English*. (Providence, RI: International Institute of Rhode Island, 1990). See also, Isserlis. "Using Action Research for ESL Literacy Evaluation and Assessment." *TESL Talk*, Vol. 20, No.1 (1990).

4. See also, Don Robishaw's remarks in *Adventures in Assessment*, Vol. 1, p.37 (1991).

Three by Three by Four: Ongoing Assessment at the Community Learning Center

Karen Ebbit, Priscilla Lee, Pam Nelson, and Joann Wheeler

The Community Learning Center/SCALE Assessment Project began when a group of ESL teachers in Cambridge and Somerville realized they shared an interest in exploring alternative methods of assessment. This article documents the process followed by the assessment team at the Community Learning Center: Karen Ebbitt, Priscilla Lee, Pam Nelson, and Joann Wheeler. Priscilla, Pam, and Joann conducted the field tests with their ESL I/literacy classes. Karen, who was not teaching a level I/literacy class during the project, did not participate in field testing but participated in the planning, development, and revision of the tools and process.

Assessment at CLC

At CLC, assessment had largely been a matter of individual teacher's choice. Some tested weekly; some did teacher-made tests at the end of a cycle; and others did not test formally, but assessed progress on the basis of classroom performance. The ESL department had discussed assessment as something the students valued but had not developed a consistent overall process. In working with SCALE, CLC staff hoped to create a process which would be comfortable and effective for students and teachers, and which would also satisfy reporting requirements for various funding sources.

The teachers began a series of four two-hour meetings at which project staff from both centers set general goals and examined options for alternative assessment. The group first looked at the relationship between assessment, goal-setting, and curriculum and then reviewed various tools for alternative assessment options including tools developed by other Massachusetts programs.

The teachers decided in the first goal-setting meeting to limit the scope of the project to developing an assessment tool which could be used at the ESL I/ESL literacy level. Their rationale was that if a tool was usable at a minimal language level, it could easily be adapted for use with students who possessed more advanced skills. The overall goal was to address not only the assessment of language skills acquired in a given period of time, but also that of learning strategies and study skills.

A Three-Part Process

After the four research meetings, project staff met separately at each center to design assessment tools that would suit the needs of their staff and students. The Community Learning Center created a three-part process consisting of a goal-setting exercise, a weekly self-assessment, and a progress record. The assessment tools were field tested in three ESL classes during two five-week summer sessions in July and August, 1991. Accounts of these field tests by the three teachers who used the process in their classes appear below. The forms, both current and revised, appear also.

Part 1. The Goal-Setting Exercise

In the initial goal-setting exercise, students prioritize, in pairs or as a group, the language survival areas they would like to explore in their ESL class. Tools for this exercise consist of five 8 1/2" x 11" drawings of survival areas and one sheet on which all the drawings are reduced so teachers can copy and cut them to make decks of cards. (FIGURES 1 and 2, APPENDIX 5) The pictures provide a context in which students can discuss where they need to use English and which survival areas they think are most important for them to learn. A box is drawn on each card for students or pairs to write in a priority number--one (for "very important") through five (for "not so important").

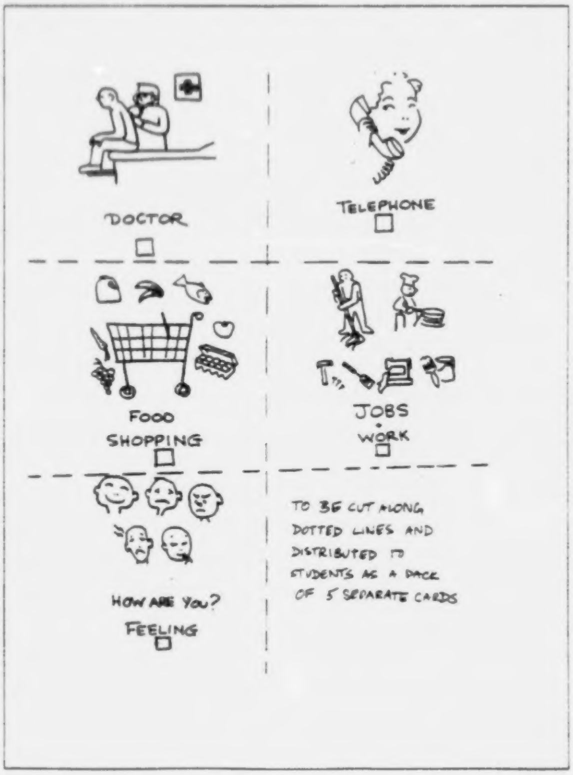
Teacher A: Goal-Setting Exercise

Objective: To help students think *about situations where they need to use English and choose which area they want to work on.*

I began the goal-setting exercise by posting the large topic pictures and giving the students a chance to read the captions and talk about the pictures. Then we discussed where English was necessary. Many of the students agreed that they did not need to speak much English to go shopping; some said that English was necessary at their workplace; others were not working. Of the three remaining cards, we talked about whether using English on the telephone, in the doctor's office, or in conversation with classmates was easy or difficult.

I passed out the sets of small topic cards and asked the students to prioritize the topics, using one for "very necessary" through five for "easy for me." The pairs got to work. I thought the activity was going well when I realized that one man had instructed everyone in Spanish to fill out their cards in a particular way--and he had completely misunderstood the exercise! He thought that I wanted to know whether he knew the Spanish translation for the captions on the cards, so he labelled the cognates, like "telephone" and "doctor," as easy, and marked the others as difficult. Everyone had followed his lead, so I decided to abandon the pair work and return to the large pictures on the board.

We repeated the discussion of situations where English is difficult and then voted as a group on each picture. The doctor's office and the telephone got



TO BE CUT ALONG DOTTED LINES AND DISTRIBUTED TO STUDENTS AS A PACK OF 5 SEPARATE CARDS

FIGURE 1

an equal number of votes for difficulty, so that was what we determined to work on for the five weeks of the class.

This goal-setting exercise took 20 minutes.

Teacher B: Goal-Setting Exercise

Objective: *To prioritize from a list the topics students want to study.*

I began the goal-setting exercise by writing on the board: "What do I want to study?" After the students read the question to themselves and aloud, I began to go through the large topic cards with the class. We discussed them in turn, identifying the items in each picture. I allowed time for students to say whatever they wanted about a particular topic before moving on.

When we had gone through the topics, I turned to the board and read the question again. I spread all the topic cards along the blackboard ledge and had one student ask me the question. I modeled how to prioritize what I wanted to study by writing the five topics on the board and putting them in order of preference. I explained that "one" designated the topic they most wanted to study and "five" what they were least interested in. Students paired and took their own set of topic cards. I asked the pairs to choose what they wanted to study and write it on a separate piece of paper.

I walked around the room during this part of the procedure and talked with students, hoping to get an idea whether they understood the task. The 13 students came up with the following "votes."

Shopping	4 1 5 5 4 1 5 5 4 5 5 4 1 1 3
Jobs	1 2 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 3 1 2 2 3 3
Doctor	3 3 2 2 3 3 2 2 2 2 2 5 4 4 2
Telephone	2 4 3 3 2 2 3 3 3 3 1 3 1 2 3
How are you feeling?	5 4 4 5 4 4 4 5 4 4 4 5 5 5 4

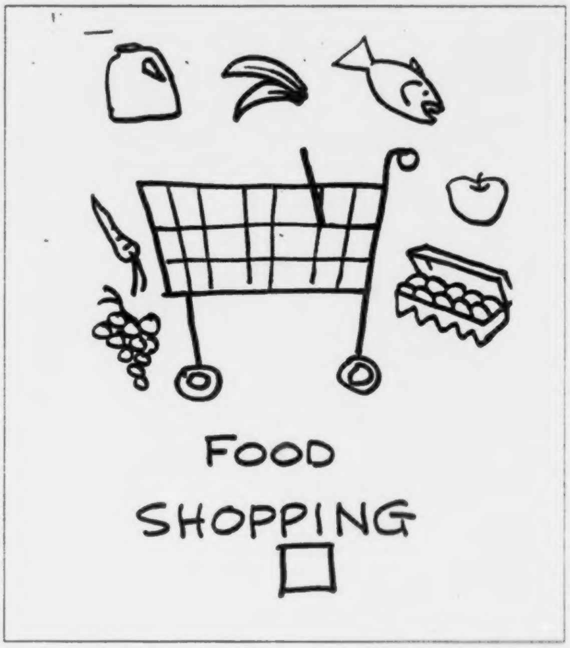
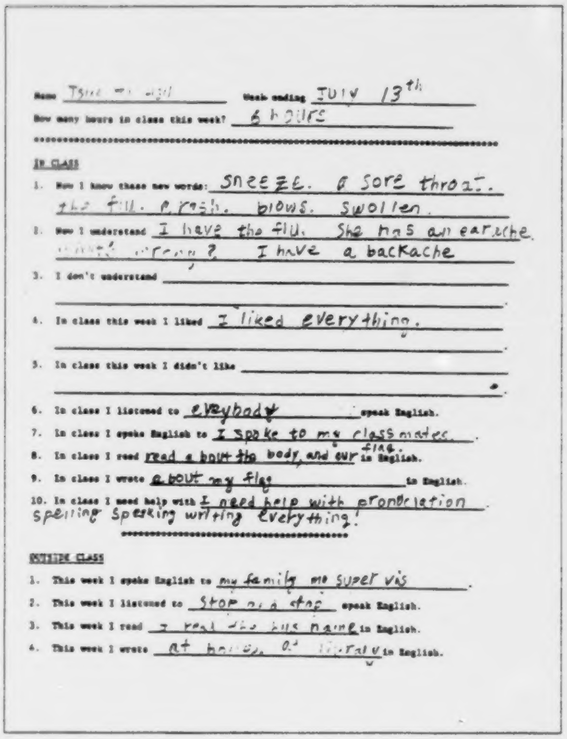


FIGURE 2

I assumed my explanation of how to prioritize was understood, but thought differently when I reviewed the students' lists. I saw that they had copied the order I had written on the board even though I had erased my numbers before the students chose their own. I had left the list of five topics on the board and the students seemed to adhere to the order of that list.

Nevertheless, I decided that whatever we worked on would be useful, so we decided on the topic of jobs. I talked with the class before figuring out how to teach this topic because I wanted to get a feel for what the students wanted. The class was composed



Name [illegible] Week ending July 13th
How many hours in class this week? 6 hours

IN CLASS

1. Now I know these new words: sneeze. a sore throat. the flu. a rash. blows. swollen.
2. Now I understand I have the flu. She has an earache. [illegible] wrong? I have a backache
3. I don't understand
4. In class this week I liked I liked everything.
5. In class this week I didn't like
6. In class I listened to everybody speak English.
7. In class I spoke English to I spoke to my classmates.
8. In class I read read about the body, and our flag. in English.
9. In class I wrote about my flag in English.
10. In class I need help with I need help with pronunciation spelling speaking writing everything!

OUTSIDE CLASS

1. This week I spoke English to my family my supervis.
2. This week I listened to Stop [illegible] speak English.
3. This week I read I read the bus name in English.
4. This week I wrote at home, at [illegible] in English.

FIGURE 3

mainly of women who either worked in the home or worked elsewhere as cleaning women in nursing homes, offices, or universities. I decided to focus our attention on vocabulary having to do with tasks/jobs/chores. My decision to limit the scope of our work was also based on the fact that our class met only twice a week for five weeks.

Teacher C: Goal-Setting Exercise

Objective: *To implement a quick prioritizing exercise so learners can direct the topical content of their course.*

I began by explaining the purpose of the goal-setting activity: "This will help me know what you want to study." I asked the learners to spread out the topic cards and order them in answer to the question: "What is important for you to learn in English?" I modeled this exercise for the students.

The students were paired and I asked them to decide, with their partners, on the sequence of the cards, substituting their preference for those just modelled by me.

The students' cooperative work took about five minutes. While the pairs conferred, I walked around the room and observed that the students didn't have problems interacting in English with each other or agreeing on how to prioritize the cards.

The topic cards were numbered by the pairs of learners, with one signifying the topic as "most important for us to learn" and two through five designating the remaining topics in descending order of importance. This is how the five pairs of learners sequenced the topics:

Doctor	2	2	1	0	0
Shopping	2	1	2	0	0
Jobs/Work	1	1	1	2	0
Telephone	0	0	1	3	1
How are you feeling?	0	1	0	0	4

The prioritizing tool was easy to use and helped the students collectively choose the topical content of their ESL class.

Part 2. The Weekly Self-Assessment

The weekly self-assessment is a one page record of new words, grammar, etc. learned in class and

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outside of class, intended to increase the students' perception of what they learned, how they learned, and where they learned.

The original form (FIGURE 3, APPENDIX 6) was too difficult for the students to use so it was shortened and simplified. (FIGURE 4, APPENDIX 7) We wanted a simpler format, one which left out questions we had judged uninformative, and one which appeared less intimidating to learners accustomed to short sentences. I tried out a shorter form--pared down from 14 to six questions. This revised form retained questions which had previously been answered with relative ease and which had been helpful for the instructor and, apparently for the students. Using the form in class, the teachers found it useful to go through the revised form as a group for the first few weeks, having the class brainstorm new words or possible responses. After it became routine, students were able to complete the form by themselves.

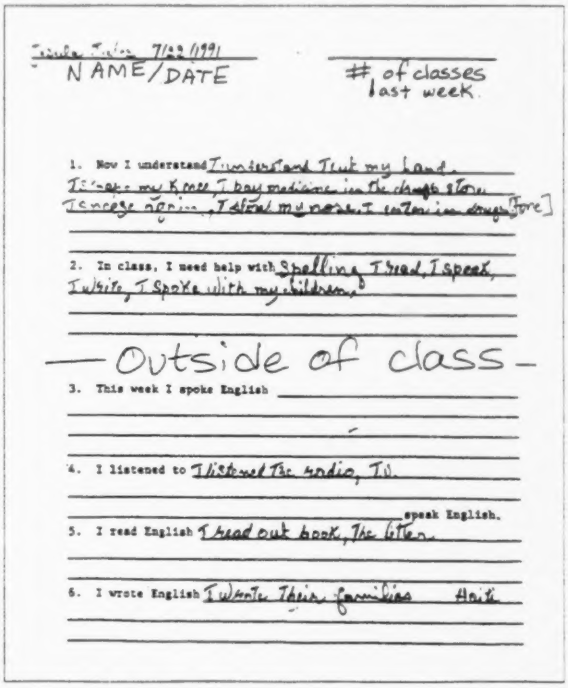
Teacher A: Weekly Self-Assessment

Objective: *To give students an opportunity to reflect on the learning process in and outside of class, and to provide the teacher with feedback on what the students think they are learning.*

I decided to use the revised and simplified form which had been developed during July. When we had completed one full week of classes, I introduced the self-assessment. I explained that their answers would help me know what they had learned. I drew a large version of the form on the board.

Everyone filled in their name and the date without problems. I had anticipated trouble with filling in "# of classes last week," so I asked the students to write how many classes they had attended so far. In two cases, students claimed to have been in class when they weren't--maybe because of the school's strict attendance policy; but, I decided not to make an issue of it. We read the first question together from the board, and I clarified by saying, "Before, no," "Now, yes." At first, no one was willing to admit to understanding anything--either "before" or "now." So I prompted them with some of the things we had worked on, such as body part words and remedies. They agreed that they understood those words, and some students wrote a few vocabulary words in the space provided.

I had left half an hour at the end of the class to do this assessment, and we ran out of time after completing the first two statements. I asked the students to take the forms home with them and bring them back to class next time. The hurricane intervened, however, and I decided not to return to this exercise.



[illegible] 7/22/1991
NAME/DATE

# of classes last week

1. Now I understand I understand I cut my hand. I [illegible] my Knee, I buy medicine in the drugs store. I sneeze again, I blow my nose, I return in drugs[tore]

2. In class, I need help with Spelling, I read, I speak, I write, I spoke with my children.

— Outside of class —

3. This week I spoke English

4. I listened to I listened The radio, TV.

speak English.

5. I read English I read out book, The letter.

6. I wrote English I wrote Their families Haiti

FIGURE 3

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Observations: I think the revised form could be used without difficulty at higher levels, but my students and I found it a frustrating exercise.

Teacher B: Weekly Self-Assessment

After we had met for four classes, I handed out the revised self-assessment form. I was mainly interested in how the students answered the first question. I explained that the form would help me know what they had learned during our first four meetings. Then I handed out the form and drew a version of it on the board.

The students did not have any trouble filling in name or date. However, there was some confusion about the "# of classes last week" because of classes missed during the hurricane and because the class met only twice each week. To simplify the process, I decided to go through my attendance sheet and tell the students how many days to write down.

I wrote the first open-ended statement on the board and asked students to read it. I explained the statement and asked students to list those words which they now understood because of our lessons. We wrote a list of those new words on the board and students chose from this list for their own form. We did not go further with this form than the first question.

Observations: The weekly self-assessment form proved problematic for my class. The concept of "now I understand" seemed strange to them and I wondered, after the class, whether they would have preferred "now I know." Perhaps the idea of writing a list of words was confusing. Whatever the cause, this activity left my class scratching their heads. I continued to scratch my own head, wondering why the questionnaire had failed. Initially I thought that I would bring back the form in a new version for the next class. However, I decided against it due to the very limited number of class hours we had; filling out the form took too much time. I believed that the progress record would provide the information we were looking for.

Teacher C: Weekly Self-Assessment

I distributed the original weekly self-assessment form to my students after six hours of classroom activity centered around "doctor," their most preferred topic. My brief introduction was, "This will help me to know what you learned last week and it will help me to teach you better." Students filled out the form as a group. We used the blackboard to record some of the responses that came out of a collective interpretation of the open-ended statements under "in class" and "outside class."

Students wrote in their names with no trouble. For the week ending, I asked the students to write in "July 7, 1991," indicating the Friday of the past week. This caused some initial confusion because some of the students anticipated writing the current date in the space, and two others had already done so. Once I explained that the date was to signify "the end of last week," students were further confused, pointing out that weeks end on Saturdays!

"How many hours in class this week?" was filled in with some hesitation. If a student left class 10 minutes early on Tuesday, did that need to be accounted for in the total? I felt that some students were reluctant to record their absence(s) due to CLC's strict attendance policy.

The first two "in class" statements: "Now I know_____new words" and "Now I understand_____" took some time as the students had to decide whether "new words" meant words they had never heard before the past week or words/concepts which, recently reinforced, were now better understood. At this point, students referred to

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(and some copied) their classmates' responses to be sure that they were on the right track. They seemed uncertain about what I wanted from them. How much writing would satisfy the teacher? The task was becoming increasingly cumbersome.

When we came to the third "in class" statement, "I don't understand_____," they asked if they could leave this space blank. Only three students wrote in this space. Answers to "This week I liked_____" and "This week I didn't like_____" seemed to me to be biased and therefore uninformative. When asked, "What did you like?" most students answered, "Everything!" Half of the students had been in my classes for over six months, and we had shared many good feelings. They wanted me to know that they had been pleased with the classes. No one admitted that they didn't like something.

For the questions, "I listened to_____speak English" and "I spoke English to_____," I listed possible answers on the board. Most students wrote some variation of "myself, the teacher, everybody, and my classmates." The students easily completed the last "in class" statements: "I read_____in English" "I wrote_____in English" and "I needed help with_____."

The students also had no trouble filling out all four of the "outside class" statements: "This week I spoke English to_____." "This week I listened to_____speak English" "This week I read_____in English" and "This week I wrote_____in English."

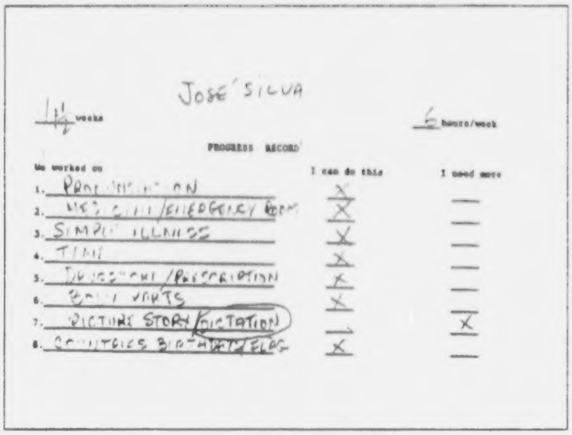
Observations: This stage of the field testing was much more time consuming than the goal-setting exercise. I had allotted the last 30 minutes of class for a task which eventually required our class to go 12 minutes over time. I suspect my vague introduction, as well as the structure of the form itself, made the task more laborious than was necessary. But, filling out the self-assessment form was, if tedious, a good experience for the students. The "in class" section required the learners to recall what was studied during class and their answers reflected what information I assume was most strongly retained. The "outside class" section caused them to consider situations in which they had (or had not) used English at work, home, and in their community.

Some of their responses were:

> **Yelena:** At Stop & Shop. Please where is the milk? Where is the butter?
>
> **Ana:** Before when I went to the doctor, I needed an interpreter, now I do it myself!
>
> **Jose:** I made a phone call in English for the first time yesterday. I called Connecticut to order something for work.
>
> **Vitanie:** I read English signs at work.

Students mentioned they had spoken English to family, friends, and neighbors at home, work, and in the supermarket. They had read English in the dictionary, at home, and at the library. One student wrote, "I read the bus name!" They had listened to English on the radio, on television, and at the supermarket. Not all students had written English outside of class, but those who had had done so at home or work.

Once completed, the forms were a great source of information for me. The students' answers, particularly the answers to "I need help with...," offered me useful knowledge. As a supplement to the assessment of each learner which I gain through "teacher instinct," the form showed my students' views on what had been learned. The form also helped me to focus on my teaching techniques and to consider ways in which my students' learning could be more enjoyable and efficient.



JOSÉ SILVA

1½ weeks

6 hours/week

PROGRESS RECORD

We worked on	I can do this	I need more
1. PRONUNCIATION	X	—
2. MEDICAL/EMERGENCY FORM	X	—
3. SIMPLE ILLNESS	X	—
4. TIME	X	—
5. DRUGSTORE/PRESCRIPTION	X	—
6. BODY PARTS	X	—
7. PICTURE STORY/DICTATION	—	X
8. COUNTRIES BIRTHDATE/FLAG	X	—

FIGURE 5

Teacher C: Weekly Self-Assessment

During the third week of class, I gave the revised assessment form to my students. By now, having used the original version of the self-assessment, they were familiar with what we were doing and why we were doing it.

Observations: The students filled out the new form individually and with far greater ease then they had its earlier incarnation. Compared with 45 minutes spent on the form the week before, the students took less than 15 minutes to fill out the new form. While the students' familiarity with the format no doubt hastened the process, the improved form clearly helped to make the weekly self-assessment an easier and more enjoyable task.

Part 3. The Progress Record*

The progress checklist is to be filled out by the class as a group at the end of a unit and kept as a record of what the group has worked on and how well each individual feels s/he has mastered the topics. The teacher and class determine what they have worked on and fill in the left side of the list. The students then check whether they feel they have mastered each topic or whether they want to work more on this area. (FIGURE 5, APPENDIX 8)

Teacher A: Progress Record

***Objective:** To enable the student to look back over a session and record what s/he learned, with an evaluation of whether or not review is necessary.*

The progress report activity worked well with my class. Perhaps my students were getting used to the idea of thinking about what they had learned; or, perhaps the checklist format was easier for them than completing open-ended statements. To begin the activity, we established, as a group, what we had worked on. Each student contributed something and I recorded the words on the board--I didn't eliminate any, but I did classify them as we went along. I wrote all the body parts in one list, all the symptoms in a separate list, etc. Then we talked about the categories of words such as body parts, symptoms, and medicines. After that, students filled in all the blanks on the progress record. Some wrote general categories; others wrote the vocabulary words they had originally contributed. When everybody had filled in the "We worked on..." column, we discussed briefly the two remaining columns, "I can do this" and "I need more." Students usually checked "I can do this" for individual vocabulary words and "need more" for categories. A few students checked "I need more" for everything, on principle, I suspect. One student did not complete the columns at all.

---

* Teacher C did not report on her use of the progress record.

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Teacher B: Progress Record

I reserved 25 minutes at the end of our final class for the progress record. I wrote, "What we worked on" on the board and asked the class to name the things we had studied. It took them a few minutes to understand what I was looking for and then they began to call out the new words they had learned. I recorded on the board whatever was said, trying to get everyone to offer something to the list. I gave each student a progress record and then explained how to fill it out. The "I can do this" column seemed confusing because of what we had studied. The phrase seemed more appropriate for talking about a task rather than a list of vocabulary words. I changed the columns to read "I understand" and "I want to study more." The students copied from the list on the board for their own forms and then checked the appropriate column.

Observation: Perhaps what is important about this form is that the class (collectively and the individually) could list the terms that we studied.

Status: Ongoing

The process of defining and developing assessment tools at the Community Learning Center continues. The current status of alternative assessment at CLC is "ongoing." We hope this account of our experiences proves useful to other ESL teachers. We would be very happy to hear from anyone who has used, changed, or expanded on the tools we have described here.

Karen Ebbitt, Priscilla Lee, Pam Nelson, and Joann Wheeler teach at the Community Learning Center in Cambridge.

Further Adventures in Alternative Assessment: an Annotated Bibliography (excerpt)

Don Robishaw

In this issue of *Adventures in Assessment* we have taken you into the world of ongoing assessment--examining the process and the tools and techniques practitioners use and looking at how ongoing assessment can benefit and serve the interests of learners as well as teachers.

Alternative assessment tools are designed and used to show what students know, not what they do not know. Alternative assessment is *alternative* because it provides choices that go beyond traditional or standardized measurement. Alternative assessment empowers learners and helps them become self-directed; standardized instruments may disempower learners by assuming all of the "authority" or by making them dependent on teachers.

Alternative assessment is ongoing and part of the curriculum, not imposed or added on at the end. An alternative assessment component may contain a variety of tools, including writing progress checklists, reading progress checklists, learning contracts, booklists, miscue analyses, etc. Depending on their developmental level, some learners can actually create their own self-assessment tools.

The primary purpose of alternative assessment is to assist students, advance learning, and improve instruction. Ongoing alternative assessment is continuous and not separated from instruction.

To support and enrich teachers' endeavors, the Research and Design unit of SABES has compiled "Alternative Assessment: An Annotated Bibliography." This bibliography is intended to be a resource to teachers who are interested in learning more about the topic as well as those interested in using the various procedures described in *Adventures in Assessment*. In the last issue of *Adventures*, I reviewed several publications that related to "getting started" with alternative assessment. This time, I have excerpted several annotations relevant to ongoing assessment.

Sample Annotations

003 Arrastia, M., Betancourt, A. & Wang, D. (1990). *Report on Staff Development Project on Alternative Assessment: Mothers Reading Program.* New York: America Reading Council.

This selection discusses how one adult literacy project examined standardized testing used with its students. It proceeds from the premise that for evaluation to be useful it must help learners to evaluate themselves, so that they can be in full control of their own learning. Standardized tests are often used as gates (exclusionary) that close off certain opportunities to learners. Evaluation and tests often contribute to learners developing a belief that they are inadequate.

Besides the short narrative, this article also includes an appendix containing samples from student portfolios. Items of interest in the portfolio include teacher- and student-made tests based on student generated text.

016 Nash, A., McGrail, L. & others. (1989). "Our Class: A Weekly Literacy Ritual." *Talking Shop: A Curriculum Sourcebook for Participatory Adult ESL.* Boston: University of Massachusetts.

"Our Class" is the name of a weekly class journal which documents the activities of a group of adult learners in Boston. The teacher collects thoughts, quotes, factual information and anything else of interest and writes them at the end of the week for the class to use as a reading and writing exercise. Eventually, the class itself compiles the journal.

The authors explain their method and discuss the importance of ritual in the literacy classroom. Samples of "Our Class" summaries are included.

026 Lawson, L. (1988). *Record Keeping in Adult Education.* "Current Issues in Teaching ESL." Nicholas, S & Hoadley-Maidment, E. Eds. New York: E. Arnold.

This paper discusses the theory behind keeping certain kinds of records. It also describes some innovations in record keeping in adult education. Record keeping has become very important in the field of adult education in the last few years, especially since the onslaught of alternative assessment strategies and wider recognition of the importance of independent learning theory.

This short article is chock full of alternative record keeping tools and instruments, as well as a brief rationale for using them. For the "organizationally challenged," this article will put you on the road to getting your act together.

029 Soifer, R., Irwin, M. & others. (1990) *The Complete Theory to Practice Handbook of Adult Literacy: Curriculum Design and Teaching Approaches.* New York: Teacher's College Columbia University. pp. 170-180.

The primary purpose of this chapter is to give a brief overview of seven different ways to assess adult literacy learners' progress. The main feature is an assessment grid that analyzes each of the seven assessment tools that follow:

1. Booklist
2. Spelling and vocabulary graph
3. Anecdotal records (teachers)
4. Anecdotal records (students)
5. Writing assessment
6. Reading behavior questionnaire
7. Attendance

The authors contend that all tools, including those mentioned, should be used in ways that focus on strengths, progress, and applications rather than weaknesses, deficiencies, and isolated skills.

Notes

As with many works which assemble a collection of readings, this bibliography is the result of the efforts of several people--from the development of the initial idea, to the search and collection of books and articles. I am indebted to the following people for their assistance in this project: Loren McGrail of World Education/SABES who supplied me with many of the resources and Joan Dixon, the Literacy Support Initiative Coordinator. In addition the following people acted as reviewers: Janet Kelly, Director of the Read/Write/Now program; Janet

Isserlis of the International Institute of Rhode Island; and the following University of Massachusetts graduate students: Michele M. Sedor, Barbara Huff, Susan Schellenberger, Haleh Arbab, Keyvan Kabastioun, and Ed Graybill.

The complete annotated bibliography contains 51 entries and will be updated on an ongoing basis. Contributions to the collection are welcome. Specifically we are looking for help in the next edition of *Adventures in Assessment: Looking Back*. Articles and/or annotations on student/teacher conferences, classroom evaluation and program evaluation are welcome. Please contact your Regional SABES Coordinator or Loren McGrail at World Education if you would like to annotate some of the collected articles and/or add new ones.

An Invitation

Letters/Responses

The next issue of *Adventures in Assessment* will feature readers' responses to the articles in this volume.

Perhaps one of the articles reminded you of a classroom assessment problem you faced and/or solved. Maybe you have questions or additional information about the tools and procedures you read about. Or perhaps you just feel like conversing with other practitioners who are looking at issues of alternative assessment.

No excuses now! We've even provided you with a response mailer (facing page).

To be included in Volume Three, letters must be received by

July 17, 1992

Articles

Volume Three will focus on "Looking Back" activities that come at the end of a cycle and that help teachers and learners reflect on what they have and haven't accomplished. However, we are accepting articles that address any of the three components of assessment: initial, ongoing, and end-of-cycle.

If you would like to submit an article, call Loren McGrail at (617) 482-9485. Writer's guidelines are available.

To be included in Volume Three, articles must be received by

June 19, 1992

Loren McGrail
Adventures in Assessment
World Education
210 Lincoln St.
Boston, MA 02111

FAX: (617) 482-0617

Dear Loren and *Adventures* Staff,

Adventurously,

Don't forget
the postage!

Loren McGrail
Adventures in Assessment
World Education
210 Lincoln St.
Boston, MA 02111

Appendices

• A reading conference is an informal meeting between a reader and teacher to talk about the independent reading a learner is doing. The discussion can include the experience of reading, the story, characters, events, and any problems or successes the reader is encountering. An individual reading conference can also be used to do an informal miscue analysis, using Alternative Procedure IV and the Procedure IV Individual Conference Form, which is reproduced in the miscue section of this kit.

• Use a Reading Conference Record form to make notes about individual reader's conferences. The same form can be used by readers to keep track of their own responses to independent reading. The Reading Conference Record form becomes part of the learner's assessment portfolio.

• Ask how the reader chose the book or help him/her choose something they are interested in reading.

• Ask how the reading is going. Does the reader find it easy, a little bit difficult, or very difficult to read? Why?

• Is the reader enjoying the reading? Not enjoying it? Why?

• Is there any character in the story the reader really likes, dislikes, or identifies with? Why?

• If the reader is not finished with the book, what does he/she predict will happen in the next part of the story?

• What does the reader do when he/she comes to unknown words?
(Suggest alternative strategies if needed)

• Ask the reader to tell you something about what they've read.

• If the reader has finished the story or book, ask if he/she would recommend it to others to read. Why or why not?

• Ask what they think they would like to read next.

LEARNING QUESTIONNAIRE
Harborside Open House

What do you already know? Do you read the newspaper? Then you can read. Do you write letters? Then you can write. Please answer all the questions below as honestly as you can. Your answers can help both you and the teachers place you in the best class at our school.

READING

1. How often do you read?

all the time   a lot   [✓ sometimes]   never

2. When do you read?

[✓ -by yourself]
-to your children
-to your parents
-at your job
-in school

3. What do you read?

[✓ -newspapers]
[✓ -stories]
-novels
[✓ -magazines]
-Bible
-how-to books
[✓ -letters]
-comics
-other:

4. What do you read at work?

-nothing
-instructions
-repair manuals
-applications
-charts
-blueprints
[✓ -other:]

5. How comfortable do you feel...

a. Reading for yourself   fine   [✓ okay]   need help

b. Reading for your job   fine   [✓ okay]   need help

c. Reading for school   fine   [✓ okay]   need help

WRITING

1. How often do you write?

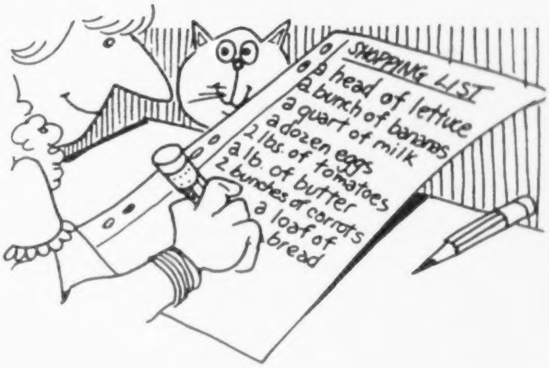
all the time   a lot   [✓ sometimes]   never

2. When do you write?

[✓ -by yourself]
-at work
-at school

3. What do you write?

-nothing
[✓ -letters/notes to family, friends]
[✓ -shopping lists]
-diaries
-business letters
-stories
-poetry
[✓ -job applications]
-reports
-dictation (secretarial skills)
-other:


SHOPPING LIST
a head of lettuce
a bunch of bananas
a quart of milk
a dozen eggs
2 lbs. of tomatoes
a lb. of butter
2 bunches of carrots
a loaf of bread

MATH

1. How often do you use math?

always   [✓ a lot]   sometimes   never

2. When do you use math?

-never
-at work
[✓ -balancing a checkbook]
-building
[✓ -figuring a budget]
-helping children with homework
-other:

READING QUESTIONS
Harborside Open House

1. Which reading did you choose? The Civil war

2. In a sentence or two, tell what the reading was about?
How slavery was the war or the states became divided

3. Could you read five pages of this a night? yes

4. Do you think this is a good reading level for you to start on? Do you think it's too easy or too hard? Yes

5. Please write any words you did not understand.

Robert Fennell

I believe people should have the right to own handguns. I would like to see the laws get alittle stricter for obtaining them I don't believe any private citizen should have the right to own any type of assault weapons I would like to see less people having access to getting gun permits

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MATH ASSESSMENT
Harborside Open House

Directions:
Please circle all the problems on this page that you know you can do.
Star the problems that you have done before, but don't remember how to do.
Leave blank all the problems you can't do.
DO NOT ANSWER ANY OF THESE PROBLEMS.

$$\begin{array}{r} 82 \\ \times 16 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 1\frac{1}{4} \\ +2\frac{1}{4} \\ \hline \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 22,986 \\ 1,120 \\ +16,125 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

$$4\overline{)126}$$

If Pat buys a loaf of bread for 49 cents and a jar of peanut butter for 75 cents, how much change will she receive from a five-dollar bill?

(1) $5.26 (2) $4.25 (3) $3.76
(4) $1.24 (5) $0.26

If $x^2 + 3x + 2 = 0$, then x =

(1) 2 only (2) 1 only (3) 1 or 2
(4) −1 or 2 (5) −1 or −2

$$\begin{array}{r} \$20.00 \\ -\ 7.79 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

$$2(x+3)-7=9$$

30 is what percentage of

The approximate area A of the curved surface of a right circular cylinder is given by the formula $A = \frac{22dh}{7}$, where d is the diameter and h is the height of the cylinder. What is the approximate area of the curved surface of a right circular cylindrical tank 3 feet in diameter and 14 feet high?

(1) 66 sq ft
(2) 132 sq ft
(3) 264 sq ft
(4) 924 sq ft
(5) 6,468 sq ft

If you wantrd to carpet a room that measures 9 feet by 11 feet, how many square feet of carpet would you need?

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WHEN YOU HAVE ANSWERED ALL THE QUESTIONS, TAKE THIS TO A TEACHER. THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

1. Do you know enough now to choose the best class for you? Yes

2. If you do, circle the class which is right for you.

EDP GED [✓ ABE 2]

teacher's signature:

NAME:________________ DATE:__________________

skills/activities comments/evaluation

Name ______________________ **Date** NOV. 6 WED

NOV 7

accident
x ray

Yesterday, DJ came to visit. We wrote about DJ.

D.J. works with Bill. D.J. is a volunteer.

D.J. wants to know about our class so he can write very excellent grants.

D.J. lives on the east side of Providence. He is married, and he has no children. He got married in 1980.

Pang: "NO BABY, husband go out smoked."

We also talked about why people steal things. Last week, people stole things from La's house.

Some people said that people steal because:

-- they don't have moeny and they can't buy things in the store so they go out and try to steal from other people.

-- because they need money, because they want money to buy drugs

-- because they're lazy to work.

-- because they are poor people.

-- because they are bad.

Why do so many people steal things?

What can we do about it?

FRUSTRATED;

CAN'T FIND A JOB

CRAZY

NO FAMILY, NO WELFARE

QUIT SCHOOL - 16, 17, 18

bad
mind
bad
heart

WHAT CAN WE DO?

kill them

put them in the garbage

a smelling room

jail

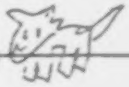
the ocean

PUT BUGS ON THEM

WHAT CAN WE DO SO PEOPLE WON'T STEAL FROM OUR HOUSES?

alarm

dog



stay home

If somebody rings the bell, don't let the children answer the door.

Are laws about stealing different in America than they are in your country?

LOCK THE DOORS, WINDOWS

ALL A TIME

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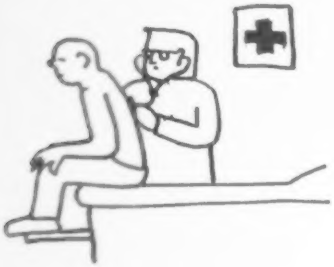

DOCTOR

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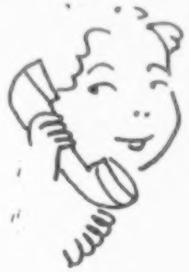

TELEPHONE

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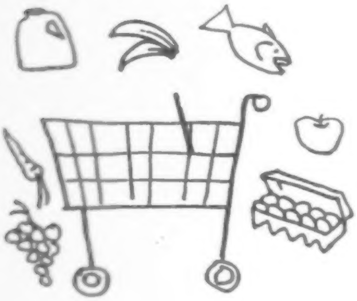
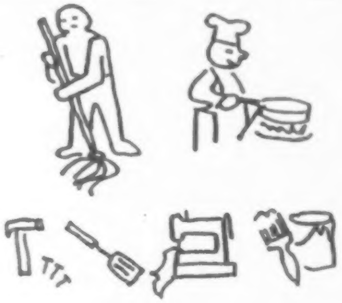


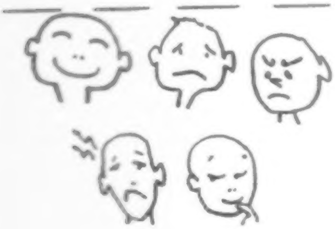
FOOD
SHOPPING

☐



JOBS
+
WORK

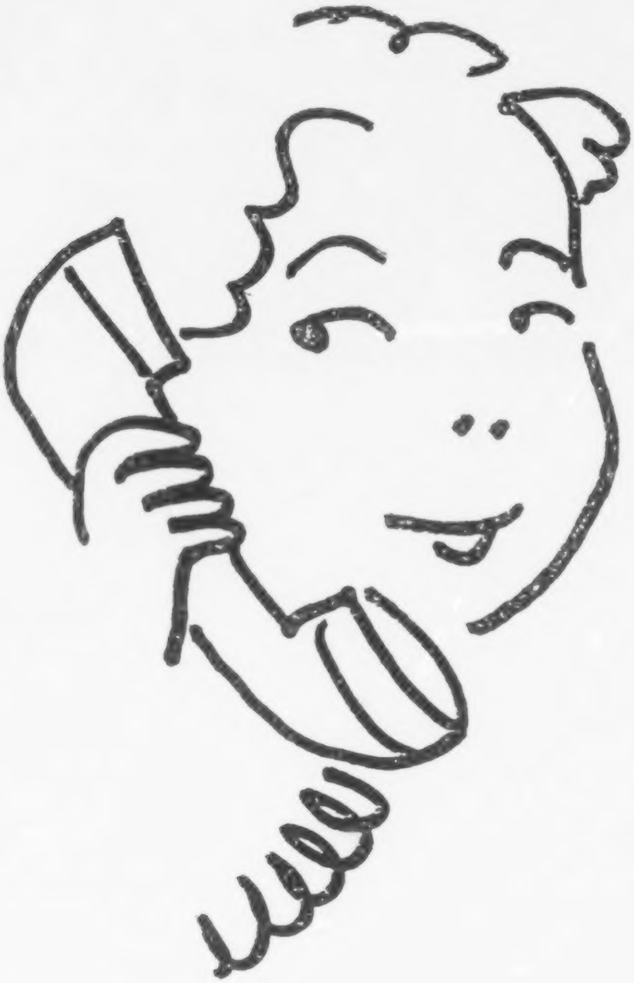
☐



HOW ARE YOU?
FEELING

☐

TO BE CUT ALONG
DOTTED LINES AND
DISTRIBUTED TO
STUDENTS AS A PACK
OF 5 SEPARATE CARDS.

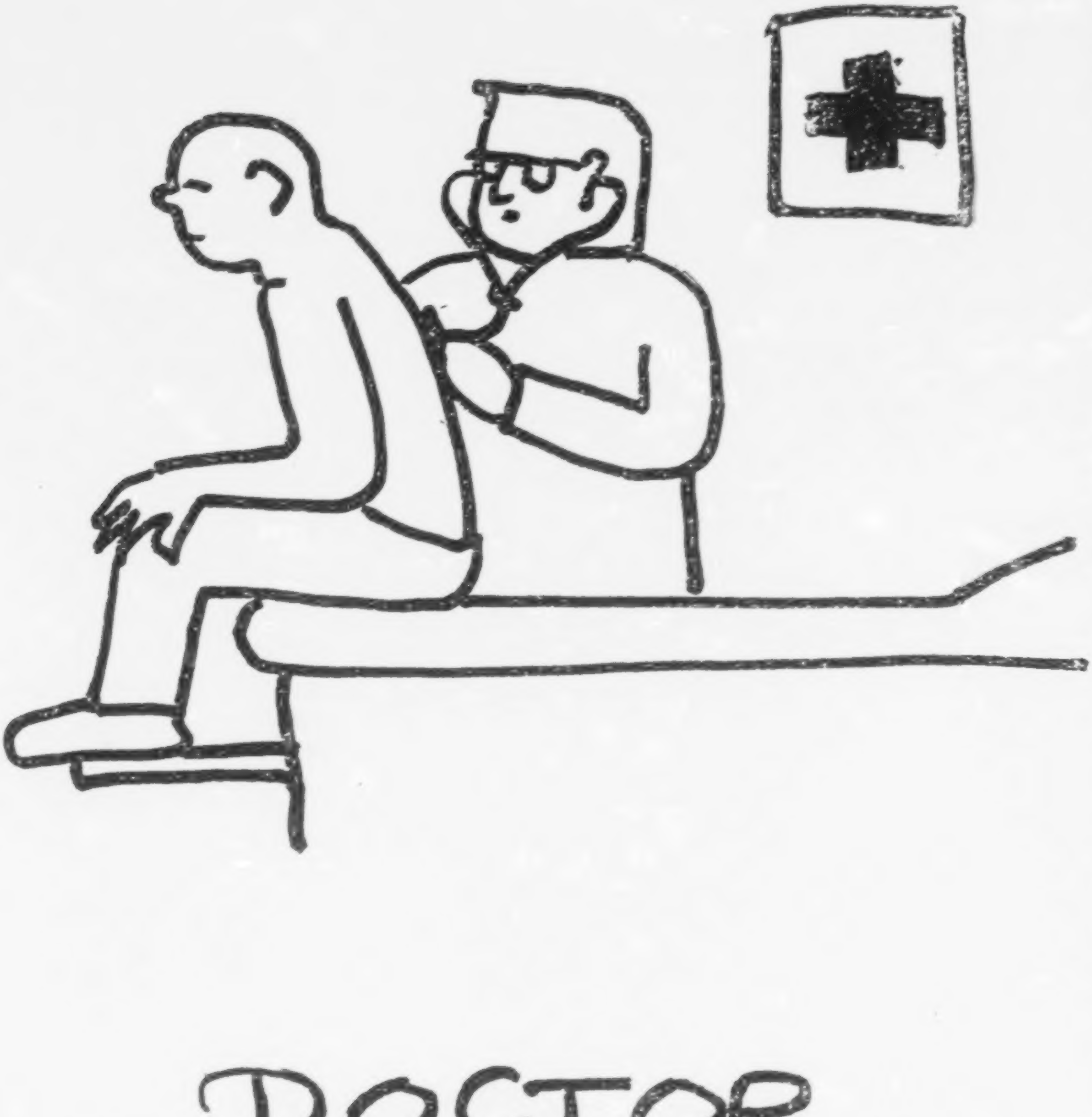


TELEPHONE

☐

FOOD
SHOPPING

☐



DOCTOR

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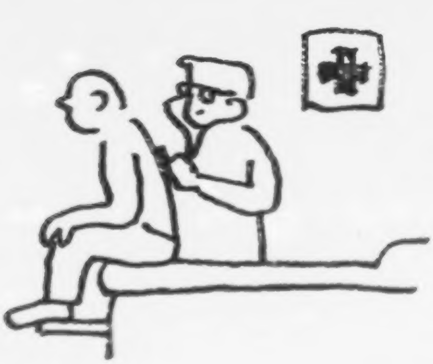

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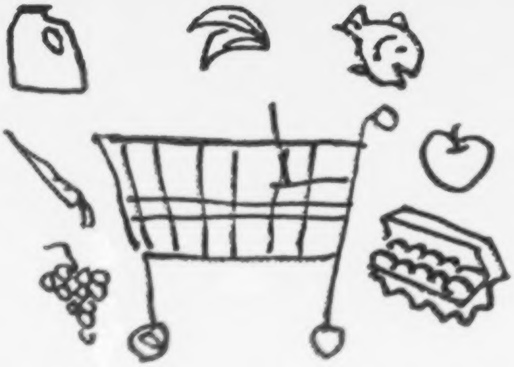

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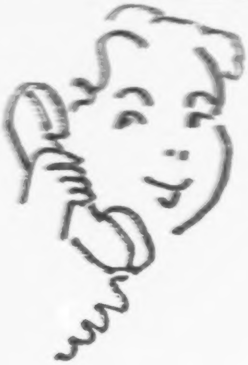

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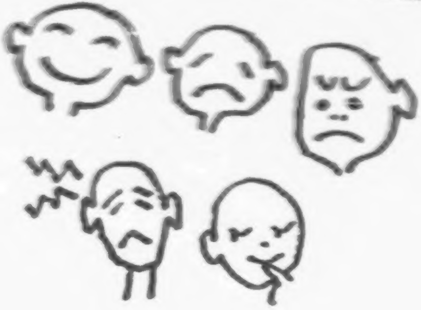

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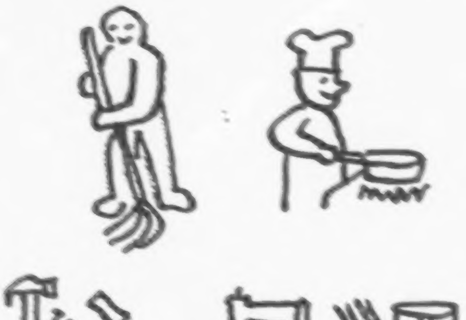

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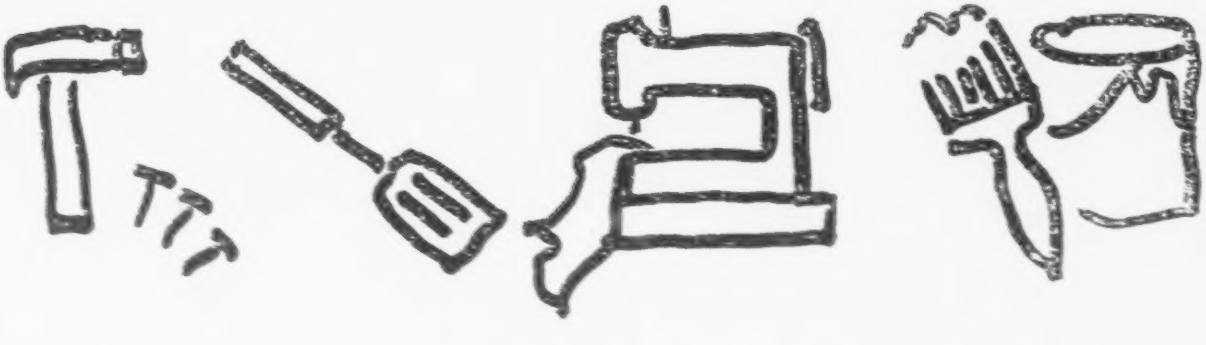
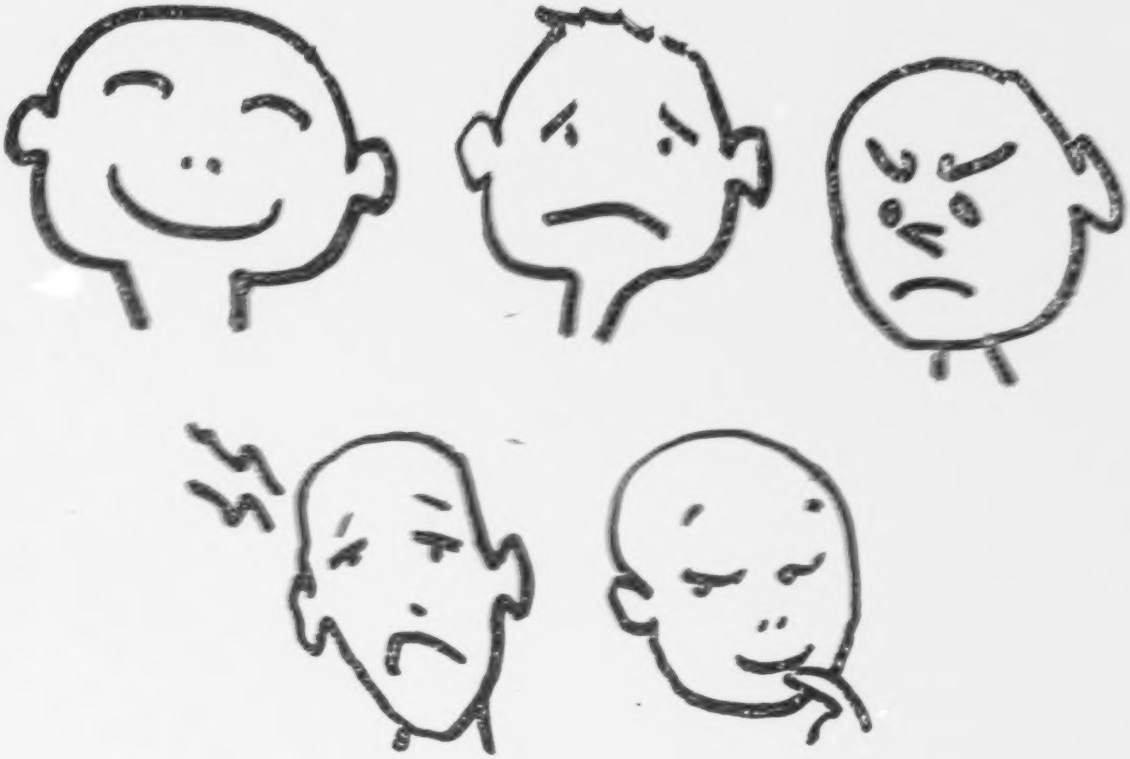


JOBS
+
WORK

☐



HOW ARE YOU?

FEELING

☐

FORM A

Name ______________________ Week ending ______________________

How many hours in class this week? ______________________

****

IN CLASS

1. Now I know these new words: ______________________

____

2. Now I understand ______________________

____

3. I don't understand ______________________

______________________.

4. In class this week I liked ______________________

______________________.

5. In class this week I didn't like ______________________

______________________.

6. In class I listened to ______________________ speak English.

7. In class I spoke English to ______________________.

8. In class I read ______________________ in English.

9. In class I wrote ______________________ in English.

10. In class I need help with ______________________.

****

OUTSIDE CLASS

1. This week I spoke English to ______________________.

2. This week I listened to ______________________ speak English.

3. This week I read ______________________ in English.

4. This week I wrote ______________________ in English.

NAME/DATE ________________

# of classes last week ________________

IN CLASS

1. Now I understand ________________

2. In class, I need help with ________________

Outside of class

3. This week I spoke English ________________

4. I listened to ________________

________________ speak English.

5. I read English ________________

6. I wrote English ________________

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_______weeks _____hours/week

PROGRESS RECORD

We worked on	I can do this	I need more
1.______________________	_____	_____
2.______________________	_____	_____
3.______________________	_____	_____
4.______________________	_____	_____
5.______________________	_____	_____
6.______________________	_____	_____
7.______________________	_____	_____
8.______________________	_____	_____

adventures in ASSESSMENT

Learner-centered approaches to assessment & evaluation in adult literacy

Volume 3

Looking Back, Starting Again

November 1992

Funded by the Massachusetts Department of Education

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SABES

System for Adult Basic Education Support

SABES is the System for Adult Basic Education Support, a comprehensive training and technical assistance initiative for adult literacy educators and programs. Its goal is to strengthen and enhance literacy services and thus to enable adult learners to attain literacy skills. SABES accomplishes this goal through staff and program development workshops, consultation, mini-courses, mentoring and peer coaching, and other training activities provided by five Regional Support Centers located at community colleges throughout Massachusetts.

SABES also maintains an adult literacy Clearinghouse to collect, evaluate, and disseminate ABE materials, curricula, methodologies, and program models. Each of the five SABES Regional Support Centers similarly offers program support and a lending library. SABES maintains an Adult Literacy Hotline, a statewide referral service which responds to calls from new learners and volunteers. The Hotline number is 1-800-447-8844.

The SABES Central Resource Center, located at World Education, publishes a statewide quarterly newsletter, "Bright Ideas," and journals on topics of interest to adult literacy professionals, such as this volume of "Adventures in Assessment."

The first three volumes of "Adventures in Assessment" present a comprehensive view of the state of practice in Massachusetts through articles written by adult literacy practitioners. Volume 1, Getting Started, *included start-up and intake activities. Volume 2,* Ongoing, *shares tools for ongoing assessment as part of the learning process; Volume 3,* Looking Back, Starting Again, *focused on tools and procedures used at the end of a cycle or term, including self, class, and group evaluation by both teachers and learners. Volume 4 covered a range of interests. Volume 5,* Tale of the Tools *was dedicated to reflecting on component 3 tools of alternative assessment. Volume 6,* Responding to the Dream Conference, *was dedicated to responses to Volumes 1-5. Volume 7,* The Partnership Project, *highlighted writings from a mentoring project for practitioners interested in learning about participatory assessment. Volume 8 covered a range of topics from education reform to learner involvement in assessment. Volume 9 looked at assessment in a volunteer program, native language literacy, ESOL programs, and evaluations in workplace education programs.*

We would like to see your contribution, especially if you are doing native language literacy or low-level ESOL literacy. Contact editor, Alison Simmons, to discuss your submission.

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adventures in ASSESSMENT

Learner-centered approaches to assessment & evaluation in adult literacy

Volume 3

Editor: Loren McGrail

November 1992

Foreword

Around this time last year, just when the last leaves had fallen off the trees, Volume 1 of *Adventures in Assessment* was published. Hot off the photocopy machine, it landed in the hands of a group of practitioners from across the state who were participating in the first Massachusetts adult basic education annual conference, Network '91.

That first issue of *Adventures* looked at learner-centered approaches to assessment featuring tools and strategies for "getting started." Practitioners wrote about start-up activities, intake processes, and tools used to get a sense of students' interests and goals. In the spring, Volume 2 appeared, featuring writing about "ongoing" assessment procedures and the ways we document learning as it takes place, including using tools such as journals, portfolios, logs, and checklists.

Now, it is late fall again–time for Network '92 and time, also, for Volume 3 of *Adventures in Assessment*. In this issue we turn to the tools and procedures used at the end of a cycle or semester when learners and teachers are "looking back" at their achievements and progress. Of course, the process doesn't end with looking back: the leaves fall, the ground freezes then thaws, the daffodils bloom and wither, the days lengthen then shorten again. Learning never stops, so this issue of *Adventures* also includes articles on "starting again."

This year, then, *Adventures in Assessment* contributors have taken you on a journey from beginning to beginning. Some of the people in that first group of readers will come back to Network '92 as writers as well as readers of this one year old publication. We are proud of their accomplishments and look forward to hearing from other practitioners who may never have written about and shared their ideas before.

We're pleased to introduce with this issue, three new continuing features which we hope will further extend the dialogue on assessment in adult education. "What Counts?" will keep readers up-to-date on math assessment, "Voices from the Field" will feature interviews with practitioners and learners, and "Letters" offers every reader the opportunity to respond informally to the opinions and practices they read about in this journal.

Write or call us with your thoughts, comments, and ideas. We would especially like to hear from those of you who have adapted some of the tools presented in *Adventures* to suit your own classroom or program's needs.

-- Laura Purdom, Editor

Please note the corrections from Volume 2 listed before the appendices in this volume.

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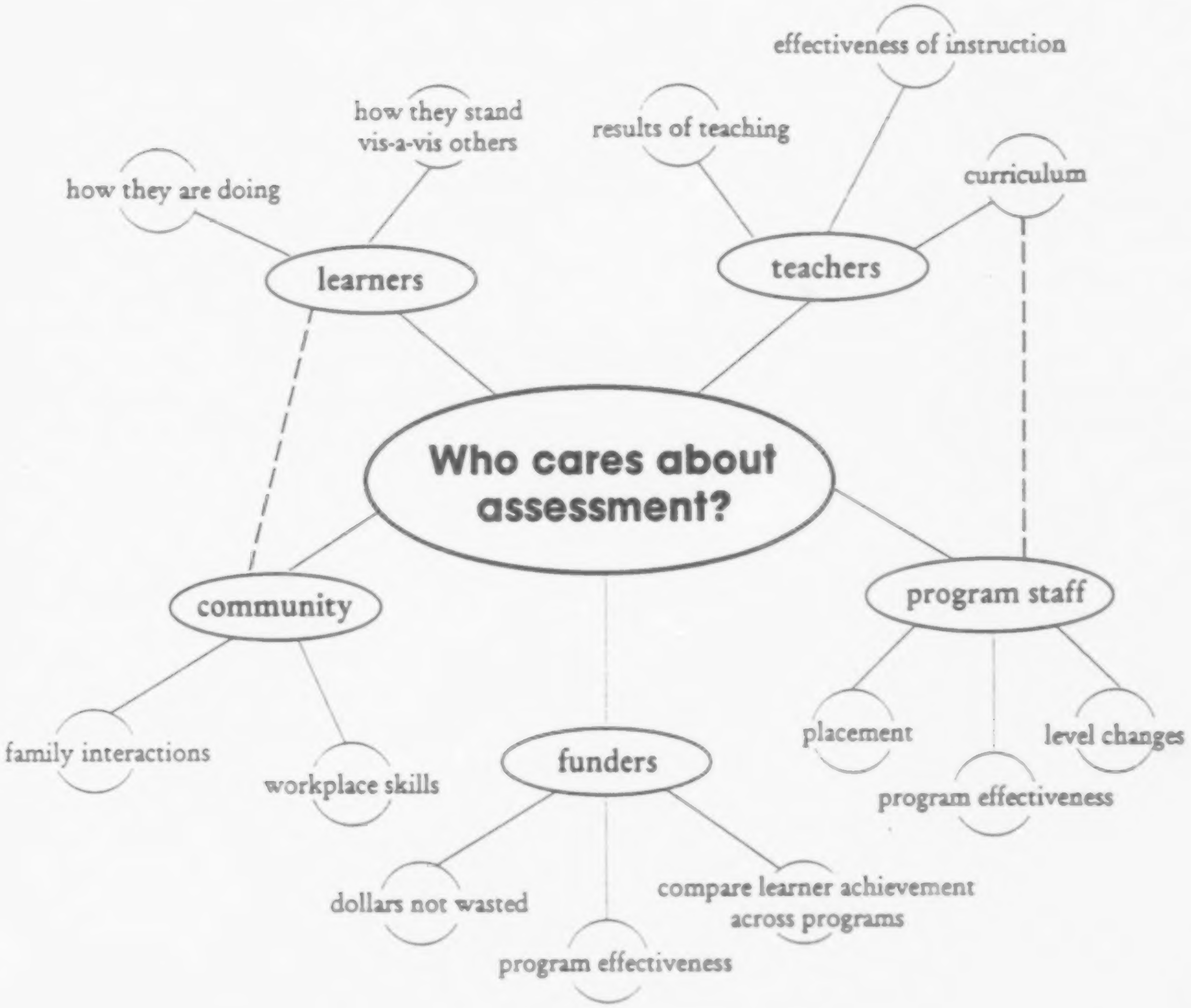
Who cares about assessment?
learners
how they are doing
how they stand vis-a-vis others
teachers
results of teaching
effectiveness of instruction
curriculum
program staff
placement
program effectiveness
level changes
funders
dollars not wasted
program effectiveness
compare learner achievement across programs
community
family interactions
workplace skills

Introduction:
Looking Back, Starting Again

Looking Back

> *Because of the ongoing nature of this process--learners learning at various rates, and with varying degrees of speed and abilities--our attempts to reflect upon progress at the end of the cycle are really part of a larger circular process of learning we never really finish.* (Janet Isserlis, p.10)

Looking-back assessments are done at the end of a cycle. They can, as Janet Isserlis states above, be a process of learning about learning for teacher and student alike. In general, they serve five main purposes:

- to indicate the levels of proficiency learners have attained in language and literacy;
- to indicate if learner goals, needs, and interests have been met;
- to document changes that have occurred in learners' lives both inside and outside the classroom;
- to provide evidence of a program's success; and
- to provide assessment data that has been aggregated across components, summarized, and made comprehensible to an audience external to a program (performance review).

Depending upon its philosophy, focus, and approach to language and literacy, a program may focus on any or all of the above objectives. Programs that aspire to a more participatory form of assessment will involve learners during both the development of the assessment strategy and during its implementation. The following is a list of strategies or procedures programs in this volume have used to meet some of these objectives:

Student self-evaluation in which learners use surveys, checklists or narratives to show changes that have occurred in their goals, interests, and needs for literacy (Isserlis, Reddy);

Reviewing documentation of classroom observations (teacher logs) to summarize progress (Isserlis);

Class Evaluations in which groups of learners provide feedback on the class, discussing what they liked and didn't like (Cason, Reddy); and

Program evaluations in which students from various classes come together to discuss programmatic issues like class time, grouping, and child care (Reddy, Cason).

There are a two other procedures not refered to by the authors in this journal which are worth mentioning:

Peer interviews in which students ask each other questions they have generated individually or collectively, and

Student/teacher conferences in which questions which have been asked at intake are reviewed for changes in literacy practice, literacy strategies, meta-cognitive awareness, increased range of literacy materials, support systems used or the support provided to others.

There are many reasons why these strategies and looking back assessment strategies in general have not been developed or implemented as fully as initial assessments or ongoing assessments. The biggest reason is time, a precious commodity for the majority of programs operating with mostly part-time staff on a shoe string budget which barely covers prep time not to mention time to evaluate learners holistically. However, I believe there is another reason, one which is even more basic. All of us– administrators, counselors, teachers, and students–find it difficult to talk about literacy and language development beyond talking about skills. We are all new to thinking about learning as a process and not just a product. What Isserlis claims is true for many learners–that they have "an innate sense of their own language movement but the expression/verbalization of that progress may not be within the frameworks they have developed or use in describing learning"–is probably true for practitioners as well. We are just at the beginning of developing our own framework and don't always know how to translate our thoughts, hunches, and ideas about what constitutes progress into practice, tools, and procedures that measure and document what we believe to be real indicators of growth and change.

Starting Again

As Ann Cason writes in this volume (p. 14), the all-program evaluation is "a tool that, while helping us to look back, is really just a beginning." What we count as progress or success at the end of a cycle should have been noted or collected as data at the beginning of a cycle.

Which aspects of language and literacy should be addressed by a program depends on which elements the program wants to emphasize. There are a number of indicators for literacy success that programs might focus on. In general, they can be categorized as evidence of progress related to language and literacy development and evidence of program success in non-linguistic domains. (Wrigley, p. 139)

When developing start-up or intake activities, some of the linguistic and non-linguistic indicators of success to look for include:

- getting a sense of what learners' needs and goals are;
- finding out how learners use literacy in their lives inside and outside the classroom (in their community or at the workplace);
- understanding what literacy means to learners or how learners judge their own capabilities;
- finding out how learners go about making sense of print, what strategies they do or do not use; and
- documenting what learners can do with literacy.

The activities and tools used to document the kinds of progress listed above include:

Informal Interviews
(Schmitt, *et al*; Jackson, *et al*)

Goal-setting Activities
(Gluckman, *et al*; Schmitt, *et al*)

Reading Samples
(Jackson, *et al*)

Writing Samples
(Jackson, *et al*; Gluckman, *et al*)

Language/Literacy Inventories
(Gluckman, *et al*)

Focus Groups
(Jackson, *et al*)

Of all these strategies, the language/literacy inventory is the most difficult to develop and implement, yet it may be the procedure that gives both learner and teacher the most concrete evidence or "base-line data" on how a learner uses language and literacy in his or her everyday life. It is the one tool that may help us understand how what we do *in* the classroom manifests itself *outside* the classroom in the family, the community, or the workplace.

As teachers begin to think about their assessment experiments, they sometimes go through a process of self-reflection. This kind of reflection may be disquieting, but I believe it is essential to teacher research. Amy Gluckman describes it best when she says that her work in assessment "...has probably forced me to acknowledge that I don't believe as completely in a student-centered approach as I might have thought. There are some things that I want my students to learn and some goals that I want them to have whatever they think about it." (p. *) Gluckman is reminding us that there is not always a clear relationship between the needs of the students and the goals of the program and that, in fact, they can even be at odds with each other. However, a participatory approach to assessment, like a participatory curriculum process, must start with valuing what learners want and need literacy for. Starting with learners' goals, needs, and interests does not mean programs have to abdicate their own goals. It is a process of negotiation. What has been missing in most traditional forms of learner assessment is even asking the question.

Re-assessing assessment, putting into practice a more participatory approach, challenges learners and teachers at their most basic level. That's the way it should be.

–Loren McGrail
Editor

"Learner Assessment in Adult ESL Literacy" by Heide Spruck Wrigley is a recent publication of the National Clearinghouse on Literacy Education for Limited-English-Proficient Adults .

• • • •

Copies of this article are available free from the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL), 1118 22nd St., NW, Washington, DC 20037; telephone (202) 429-9292.

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Looking Back

What Happened to Rosalie?: Thoughts at the End of a Cycle

by Janet Isserlis

This article describes a process of reflection and analysis at the end of a cycle during which I facilitated two classes at the Literacy/ESL Program at the International Institute of Rhode Island (IIRI). It also reflects my concerns about learners' progress. These concerns are felt throughout the course of any cycle and pertain to issues regarding learners and the connections they make between literacy and language learning in the classroom and beyond that context. Initially, I want to know what learners already know and to help strengthen and increase their abilities with literacy. As the cycle continues this impetus fuels continued interaction around literacy and language, and finally, when the cycle is finished, I need to learn what has happened and what hasn't happened in order to continue refining the unending process of learning from and with learners.

The Setting

The ESL/Literacy Program at the International Institute, in the words of its educational director, "creates a place" for those learners who can't really thrive in regular ESL classes. Not only is print and the ability to interact with print a barrier to their successful participation, but the constraints of many mainstream ESL programs present barriers as well. Regular, punctual attendance is not always possible for our learners. In most ESL programs, where waiting lists are long, attendance policies would quickly eliminate most of our students. Tuitions would not be payable—even the nominal fees charged by the Institute in order to keep its other programs afloat. While learners in other programs face similar barriers, for our learners, the extra latitude in attendance policies and the extra support around and beyond literacy provide important first steps in helping them assume greater responsibility for their own learning—initially, in accessing the class, later in developing ability with language and literacy.

> *"...I need to learn what has happened...in order to continue refining the unending process of learning from and with learners."*

The author is indebted to Rosalie François, Sara Smith, and Fran Collignon.

The Learners

Rosalie François finished the school year on June 19. She had been studying in the Literacy/ESL program at IIRI since the previous November. Two days prior to our last class I had read aloud to her a paragraph describing her initial entry into literacy learning (*Adventures in Assessment*, Volume II, p. 41). Reading the passage, I felt apprehensive. Rosalie had given me permission to write about her earlier in the year, but how would she feel about actually hearing her strengths and weaknesses being analyzed?

> *"She said she had felt ashamed when she first came to school because all she had been able to write was her name. She says that she is a 'miracle.'"*

Rosalie was delighted. I gave her a copy of the article, asking if she would like to take it home to her husband. This she did. She reported during our last session that her husband was also very happy about the article, as well as about the progress she made during the months she attended classes. We have spoken at length about her feelings when she started the program and about how those feelings have changed during the course of the several months she was in school. She said she had felt ashamed when she first came to school because all she had been able to write was her name. She says that she is a "miracle." She has developed a core sight word vocabulary as well as a few initial strategies for dealing with words she cannot decode. During the last week of class we had worked on addressing letters. Everyone learned where and how to write her return address, where the stamp goes and where the address is written as well. I invited learners to write me a letter sometime during the summer if they wanted to. Not even a week later, Rosalie had written me a lovely letter.

Rosalie's classmates were native speakers of Spanish, French, Creole, and Hmong. For the most part, the class was comprised of women. (Three men studied during the course of the year, but those who attended consistently were all women). Rosalie and Bacilia were the most consistent in their attendance and the ones with the most basic level literacy skills. This class met five days weekly, for two and a half hours in the morning. The bulk of our work together was generated through language experience stories which were typed up to be read the following day. From these stories we built strategies for using phonetic cues and reading new sentences, as well as continuing ongoing work with dates, days, and high frequency words. We also worked from photos and objects that the women brought in to share with each other. An ongoing project centered around reading about and discussing homelessness, culminating in a visit to a shelter for which we had collected money throughout the winter and spring.

A few of the women who were more advanced than the others chose to remain in the class as peer helpers. Eventually, everyone was able to help everyone else at various times—from helping to transcribe a story on the board, to knowing and calling out a word that someone else was unable to decode. As a group, the beginners made very slow but steady progress throughout the year. Those women who were already able to read and write strengthened those skills they did have by participating in the class and by working with other learners whose skills were less developed.

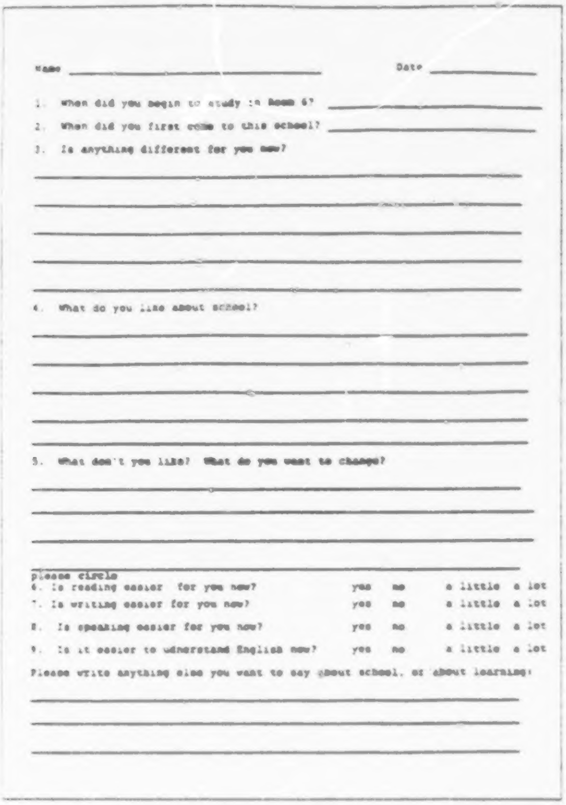
In addition to Rosalie's class, I worked with another group of learners for two hours daily, four days a week in the early evening. This group was on the whole more advanced than Rosalie and her beginning level classmates, all of whom were new to the program this past year. In contrast, most of the evening students had been in class with me or with Fran Collignon for at least six months. Those few who were not returning from the previous year were either friends or family of current students or had been on a waiting list generated at the start of the school year.

Although we used a great deal of language experience writing in this group, we also did a fair amount of reading for new meaning—using texts from *Voices*, various textbooks (readers for the most part) as well as homework based on learner-generated writing from class. The turnover of students from this class was greater for a number of reasons: we added a third teacher to the staff in the spring, hoping to help my advanced learners make the transition from the ESL/Literacy program to the English Language Center (the agency's mainstream ESL program) in the fall. Additionally, learners came in from Fran's more basic level class and others left because of health or family constraints. One other difference between this class and the morning session was that the learners had more oral/aural English at their command. Although I spoke Spanish and French when necessary, it was far more difficult to get the morning students to speak English than it was with the evening students, probably because there was a sizeable group of Hmong learners, and only a minority of Haitians and Spanish speakers in the evening class. The use of learners' languages in the classroom (Does it help? Is it a disservice? Is there a balance to be struck?) is one of the factors I consider when stepping back from the past cycle in order to try to gain a sense of how and why things worked and did not.

The Process

When examining learners and assessment, Rosalie is easy. For her, talking about her progress comes as easily as breathing. Her aural/oral abilities are such that this kind of metawork[1] is dynamic and endlessly illuminating. She is, however, atypical of most adult ESL/literacy learners. Not only is her ability to express herself in English unusual, she also accepts that talk about literacy is important. She is justifiably proud of her accomplishments and positively beams when discussing them. Her explicit acknowledgement of her progress is not typical, particularly of those learners from southeast Asia, with whom I have worked. The notion of stepping back to look at progress over a period of time is a very school-like idea. Those of us who went to school in this country knew that report cards would come quarterly. Teachers would chastise those of us "not working to our fullest potential" and/or would praise improved handwriting and comportment. Our

> *"When examining learners and assessment, Rosalie is easy. For her, talking about her progress comes as easily as breathing."*



Name ______________ Date ________

1. When did you begin to study in Room 6? ________

2. When did you first come to this school? ________

3. Is anything different for you now?

4. What do you like about school?

5. What don't you like? What do you want to change?

please circle

6. Is reading easier for you now? yes no a little a lot

7. Is writing easier for you now? yes no a little a lot

8. Is speaking easier for you now? yes no a little a lot

9. Is it easier to understand English now? yes no a little a lot

Please write anything else you want to say about school, or about learning:

FIGURE1

own self-assessment abilities often developed after high school—when we began to choose what (or if) to study. We may have known early on that we were bad at math or good in English, but for many of us, our own entré into assessment was through those assessments levied by our teachers. As educators now, we may reflect back and find that we have a range of reactions to our previous schooling. Our own sense of how we know about learning and progress has evolved from a position of relative strength—we've been literate learners for years.

For learners with little prior schooling or from cultures where teachers dictate what occurs in a classroom, the concept of self-assessment may be difficult to grasp. Surely, many learners have an innate sense of their own movement with language and literacy, but the expression/verbalization of that progress may not be within the frameworks they have developed or use in describing learning. Not only is abstract (general) self-assessment sometimes difficult, even acknowledging one's ability to accomplish a specific task is often hidden by layers of cultural patterning. Many Hmong women, for example, truly readers, will say "I don't know" when asked to read aloud in class. My colleague Fran Collignon, who has worked extensively with Hmong learners in community and educational settings, tells me that this is largely bound to women's roles within the Hmong culture.

Many of the other learners with whom I've worked, when asked "What do you think you learned this year?" tell me that I'm a good teacher, I believe, to show me respect and express appreciation. They do not tell me what they have learned, however. Others, being modest, tell me "nothing" has changed for them during the course of the year. The pencil/paper work we do, (see Fig. 1) as well as ongoing brief and later extended discussions, tell me that some learners do not necessarily give the same valence to this talk about learning and/or have yet to be able to actually feel enough of their own progress to be able to step away from it and say, "Yes, before this year, I couldn't read the schedule at work. Now I can" or "I still don't read anything at home, but I feel better in school." I believe that this metaprocess is viewed in different ways by different learners, and that factors such as prior exposure to schools or progression from one level to another in their current schools might have something to do with this.

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Discussions about progress may inevitably be connected in learners' minds to discussions about a teacher's merits. Not only do cultural patterns of modesty come into play, other assumptions about what teachers need, want to, or should hear are also involved.[2]

Throughout the course of the cycle (from September to June) with both groups, I tried to make learners more consciously aware of their learning processes. When someone was able to write an entry in a dialogue journal without assistance, I would point it out. I would encourage someone else having difficulty reading a line of print to go ahead to the next word and then try to figure out from the meaning what that word might be. I would ask people who were clearly making progress if they thought they were progressing. Sometimes my questions were met with polite nods; at other times cultural patterning took over; occasionally someone would agree that they were able to do something they had previously been unable to accomplish.

With the pencil/paper surveys, I try to elicit specific information from learners. I am learning that such surveys, at least at present, in and of themselves are occasionally useful, as part of the necessarily ongoing assessment process. The surveys themselves, however, seem to be artificial. These surveys ask learners to think and write about progress after six or nine months—in terms somewhat removed from the everyday language we used to talk about learners' literacy. However, it was the learners themselves who helped me to see in a very concrete manner the ways in which independence with literacy can in fact improve one's outlook on day to day life. These insights did not emerge through surveys.

Bacilia's progress is evident to Rosalie, who encourages her often. It's apparent to me, and I point out to her the difference in the way her print looks since she began in January and the way it looks now, months later. Bosilia herself says she feels happy because she knows some English and feels a bit more capable of dealing with office appointments on her own. Her attendance was virtually perfect; only clinic appointments and the odd day or two found her missing from class.

Evening Students: The Survey

- Is anything different for you now?

"No for me no is different. nothing."

◆

"different country for me different people for me and different food for me different school"

◆

"before I understand nothing. now I understand small"

◆

"now I learn more than before. Some things I can do alone. Some stories from my friend I can read; road signs a little bit."

◆

"Me siento diferente en mi escuela porque he aprendido cosas que no sabia y me gusta a mi profesora tanto como la que tenias ante"

◆

"different country in people in school"

For Surprise, the gradual progress I'd observed was translated (literally, by Rosalie, from Creole into English): "She didn't know what to do [before]; not her name. She can spell her name." Surprise can also follow along on a page when someone is reading, and can work her way across a line of print. For now, she relies on memory and only slightly on actual print for cues to decoding. Between her statement through Rosalie, her affect (she attends more frequently; she is affectionate and warm where she was once silent and withdrawn), and the actual strides with following print, I see that some foundation has been laid. Since I started writing this essay, I've received a letter, written by Surprise's daughter ("Because of my daughter she can't print and I can copy maybe next time I will try my best to write you something"). In her letter, Surprise has her daughter write "I know how to write my name, take a bus [Rosalie showed her how to take the bus] A,B,C so on and so forth...I know I can read even though it's not much it's still something for me." (See Fig. 2)

> *"These are small steps, surely, but important ones in the context of the ongoing events in the classroom and the small tenuous bridge we try to build between it and the world beyond."*

Everyone in the morning class can now write the date at the top of the blackboard before class begins. They can all go to the board to transcribe something—with varying degrees of assistance from others. They are all willing to try. These are small steps, surely, but important ones in the context of the ongoing events in the classroom and the small tenuous bridge we try to build between it and the world beyond.

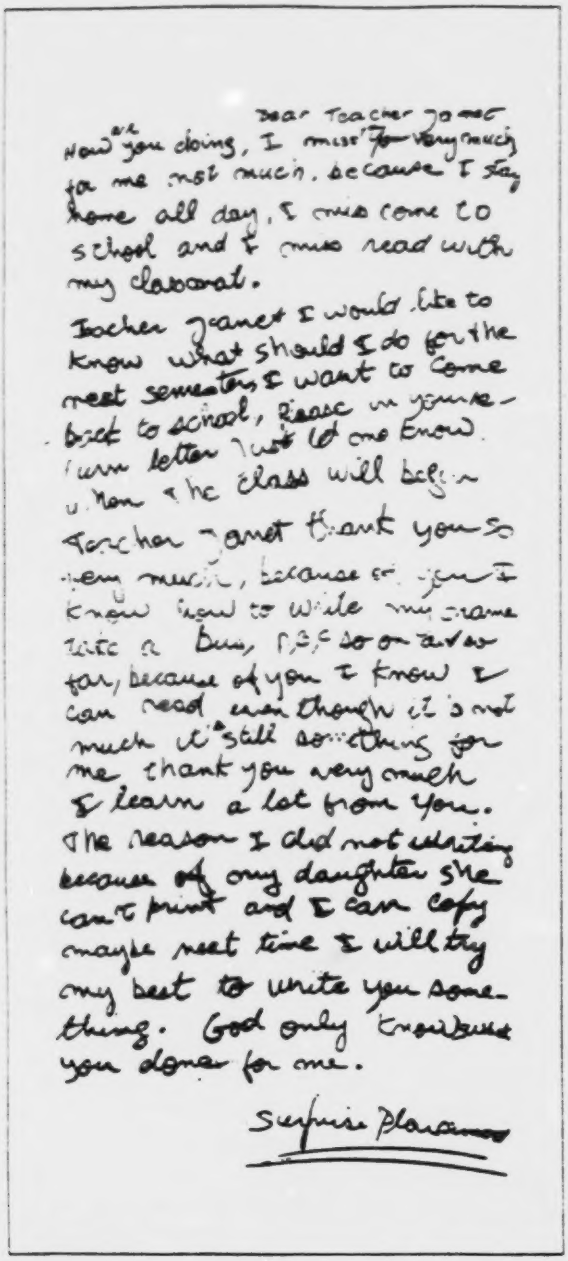
Triangulation *: Putting It All Together

In rereading my notes and the surveys, weeks and months later, I realize the differences in perspectives between observations (my own) and reportings (the learners'). Right now, these surveys tell me more about how learners respond to surveys than about how they actually feel about those questions posed in the surveys. This reminds me of something Lenore Balliro reported during her early research into alterative assessment. One state administrator acknowledged openly that the (standardized) tests being discussed did little more than test the abilities of the test-takers to take tests. There is value in the process of asking questions about how learners learn and about how they feel they are progressing. This talk about learning, however, is somewhat a language of its own and must be learned as (yet another) language.

Learners' responses to the surveys teach me about needing to find better ways to ask the questions, while reminding me of the importance of ongoing dialogue with learners as well as ongoing documentation of classroom observation.

---

* "Triangulation" refers to the process of looking at various forms of data (surveys, transcripts, writing samples, observations) in order to make sense of and derive meaning from such data. Leo van Lier's "The Classroom and the Language Learners," (Longman, 1988) is an excellent resource for research methodologies.



Dear Teacher Janet
How are you doing, I miss you very much
for me not much, because I stay
home all day, I miss come to
school and I miss read with
my classmat.
Teacher Janet I would like to
know what should I do for the
next semester I want to come
back to school, please in your-
letter just let me know
when the class will begin
Teacher Janet thank you so
very much, because of you I
know how to write my name
take a bus, etc so on and so
far, because of you I know I
can read even though it's not
much it still something for
me thank you very much
I learn a lot from you.
The reason I did not writing
because of my daughter she
can't print and I can copy
maybe next time I will try
my best to write you some-
thing. God only knows what
you done for me.

Surprise Pla[illegible]

FIGURE 2

What Next?

In thinking about the classes to come (as this reaches most of its readers, new fall classes are well underway), I wonder what might actually be the value of all this reflection. What new goals and objectives might it help us set? Geoff Brindley talks about purposes, goals and objectives:

> ..[S]etting objectives (of whatever kind) will not in itself automatically lead to more effective learning. The objectives might be irrelevant or incomprehensible to the learners or unattainable in terms of the resources they have at their disposal. For this reason it is very important that learners are involved in formulating the objectives and deciding on the most appropriate ways to achieve them. Objectives are not just a technical tool to help teachers; they are meant to make learners' life easier as well.[3]

When I consider what my learners can do, I obviously worry about what it is that they cannot do. Rosalie's enthusiasm is tempered by my own nagging doubts about what she and her classmates may or may not retain over the summer and more importantly about the connections they make between the print related work we do every day at the blackboard and the maze of print they confront outside of school each and every day. Surprise's letter validates all of us, I think, in that she has either learned well what she thinks I need to hear or (I hope) that she herself does see the possibilities inherent in those small but solid steps she's taken in the six months since she started school.

Brindley's work provides a useful framework for thinking about concrete ways of working with learners towards involving them

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not only in the assessment of their own learning but more importantly, in the evolution and shaping of that learning process. Our own reflection, coupled with ongoing investigation, action, interaction, and dialogue should help us further learners' abilities and options for and around writing, reading, and using language and literacy in ways that are meaningful to them.

A Final Note

One shortcoming attributed to adult education, particularly ESL, is that we never seem to have a sense of closure. As long as the program is funded, learners can come back and work within it for as long as they need to. Although in recent years, funding constraints have forced us to shut down for the summer, there isn't the same kind of closure for our learners that many of us may have felt at the completion of high school or college. Learners come back to classes and their learning continues. It seems that the summer hiatus passes almost unnoticed; we pick up where we left off. When learners actually leave the literacy program, I may feel some sense of closure, but they still state, "I need English." Many of them will continue for as long as they can in one or another mainstream ESL program. Others will need another cycle or cycles in literacy before feeling ready to try out the next step. Because of the ongoing nature of this process–learners learning at varying rates, and with varying degrees of speed and abilities — our attempts to reflect upon progress at the end of the cycle are really part of a larger, circular progress of learning about learning we never really finish. We lay foundations, we hope that learners gain the needed confidence, community, and validation they will need to continue learning. We need these things, too.

And finally, Rosalie: "I can write something, I'm happy because somebody can read and see what I'm saying." That's a goal right there.

Notes

1. By "metawork," I refer to processes of metacognition—knowing about knowing. It is largely in those processes that we strive to engage learners when working towards learner-centered assessment and learning.

2. For a very different take on learners evaluating teachers, see A. Wennerstrom and P. Heiser's "ESL Student Bias in Instructional Evaluation," *TESOL Quarterly* (1992) Vol 26. No 2. In it, the authors touch on cross cultural differences in students' perceptions of teachers, but their focus is geared toward performance evaluations and subsequent career implications for those being evaluated. Although the focus differs radically from the kind of reflective assessment generally discussed within this series (*Adventures in Assessment*), it is important to remain mindful and aware of those "other" forms of evaluation and assessment; they're the "norm."

3. G. Brindley (1989). *Assessing Achievement in the Learner-centered Curriculum*, Macquarie University National Center for English Teaching and Research, p. 9.

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Sitting Down Together at the End of the Year

by Ann Cason

Three years ago I wrote about my experience with all-program evaluations at Jackson Mann Community School in Allston.[1] Jackson Mann is a large community center with a comprehensive adult education program with full time staff. It is well established with a history of participatory program management. Currently I am teaching in a vastly different setting, a small, new ESL program which is one of many programs at the Log School Family Education Center, a settlement house on Bowdoin Street in Dorchester.

About the Log School

The Log School has been a part of the Bowdoin Street neighborhood for over 20 years and is small enough so that community residents are often involved in various programs within the center. More importantly, there is an agency-wide philosophy of community empowerment and strong ties between the programs within the center. Students who enter the ESL program often have other connections within the Log School. They may be volunteers working in the Friday morning food pantry or parents with children in the pre-school. Many are members of the Family Cooperative and participate in aerobics classes or the crafts circle or take advantage of monthly holistic health clinics. The connections which ESL students have to programs within the Log School mean that students' roles at the center go beyond that of ESL students. These diverse roles mean that program participants have a broad view of the program and the center–a view that goes beyond what happens in the classroom. It also means that students feel a sense of ownership. This is their community center.

A New ESL Program

In many ways, the setting of the multi-service center, especially one which includes a family cooperative, is ideal for a participatory program. The fact that the ESL program is new, and that it was begun in response to requests from community members, and that many students were involved with the center before the ESL program was established, further suits it to participatory program development. The teachers and students meet together frequently, both in classes and at social events, workshops and orientations. Students have many channels within the center to evaluate the program and the classes. Many students have strong ties to the outreach worker at the school, others attend monthly cooperative meetings to develop and evaluate activities at the school. Yet even in this setting, unless a system for input is established, the hierarchical structure to which most of us are accustomed falls into place. In addition, with the very limited resources of our program, it is difficult to find time for staff and students to meet together.

> *"Many students spoke of the difficulty of coming to classes when one is raising children, looking for a job, and going to appointments."*

The All-program Evaluation

After a little more than a year of ESL program operation, we decided to join the classes for all-program evaluations.[2] While all teachers work with their classes on evaluating how well the classes are working and how well learners are meeting their goals, our idea was to get beyond curriculum and teaching styles to an evaluation of how the overall-program is meeting the community's needs.

We had intended to meet as an entire program, but instead met in two separate groups to facilitate the participation of as many students as possible. We, as teachers, came to the evaluation meetings with specific questions meant to spark discussion if needed. These we wrote on the board.[3] (see Appendix 1)

The two groups of students and teachers responded differently. The first group–the smaller one–was a group of about twenty students. This group used the questions as a springboard for the discussion of the program. The question that we focused on most was retention and what everyone in the program can do to enable students to participate fully in a complete cycle. Students had diverse ideas. Some suggested that new students need a more complete orientation to the program and to the whole process of learning English. As a woman from Brazil said, "Oh my god, the first day I came here, I felt like a baby. I was so nervous. I came with my husband. I said to him, 'Tell them I don't speak English.'"

Many students spoke of the difficulty of coming to classes when one is raising children, looking for a job, and going to appointments. We, as teachers, spoke of our need for information about when the classes or programs are not meeting students' needs, as well as the frustration we face of turning away students seeking classes because we don't want to fill someone's slot who may be planning to return. Some students suggested that teachers be more demanding about attendance.

The second meeting was a little bigger and the group followed the questions more closely. One student spoke of the importance of the native language tutoring project where every day for the past two cycles a more advanced student has been working with her. Other students spoke of the need to change the hours of the class and we talked about the possibility of a morning class for the fall. We discussed the difficulties of child care (we have child care available only during the afternoon) and of limited physical space at the school.

Some students talked about wanting teachers to assign homework every day, while other students said that they receive homework every day but not everyone does it. Some students suggested that there needed to be more time spent reviewing homework in class because many students don't understand it completely. One student said she tries to get extra help as much as possible from the family advocate at the school, but that the family advocate does not always have time.

I typed up the notes from both of the evaluations so students could have a record of what we discussed in both groups. I also typed a letter to students with the program changes that we were implementing along with some of the changes we were not able to make at this time, but that we are exploring for the future.

Changes

These discussions affected not only the teachers' methods, but the program as a whole. Here are a few of the concrete changes that came about as a result of the all-program evaluations:

- We decided to establish two drop-in tutoring times, one before the first class in the afternoon, and one later in the afternoon to enable students to get some extra help on homework or other learning areas.
- Through discussion of the balance between reasonable expectations and the logistics of dealing with life and the need to consider students on our waiting list, we decided upon a clearer orientation on program objectives before classes begin, and to include sharing by students who have been involved in the program for some time.
- Resulting from the second meeting, we are considering a morning class for September, depending on space and the needs of incoming and current students.
- We decided to expand our participatory philosophy to include the orientation process so that students are aware, from the beginning of their connection to the program, that we have strong beliefs about teaching and operating a program.
- We instituted a new attendance policy. If a student misses three classes, a teacher will contact him or her to see if the student plans to return to the program that cycle.

Concrete changes are important. It is encouraging when there are some straightforward solutions or compromises to try out. Often, however, teachers struggle with the lack of funds and other resources and feel there are few options, not seeing the value in exploring what students would ideally like from the program. While the immediate changes that we can make are the most concrete benefit of exploring these needs, they are not the only, nor perhaps the most important ones. The less tangible gains of building the program's sense of community, envisioning the program as part of a larger entity, and getting outside the classroom to involve students in leadership roles may be far more important in the long run.

These discussions affected not only the teachers' methods, but the program as a whole.

It is the discussion, the opportunity not only for student feedback, but for dialogue across classes and between students and teachers which is most important in this enterprise. I believe that the more we share with students our vision of the ESL program as one component of a larger whole and as a community program which is meant to respond to their interests and needs, the broader the effects of the program, and the way in which students view the program, will in turn have an effect upon classroom learning, curriculum, and attendance.

As students see the ESL program as part of a larger whole, they begin to bring more community issues and concerns to the program, and to see those concerns as legitimate topics of discussion and action for the ESL class. One example of this in our program has been the issue of safety in Ronan Park, a nearby park. The park is beautiful, has a playground, basketball courts, and overlooks the harbor, but is underutilized due to safety concerns. A few weeks after the all-program evaluation, when we were planning a picnic in Ronan Park, students in one class brought their concerns about the park to class and asked the teachers to set up a meeting with the Log School director and the police. Since this time, several students have participated in meetings on neighborhood safety with a coalition of community residents, merchant, health, and social service organizations, and the police. One literacy class had a discussion and language experience letter centered around the strategy of community crime watch. Police feel that this is the most effective tactic, while students are frightened of repercussions and feel that the police need to take more responsibility.

We still have a long way to go in terms of developing our program evaluation meetings. We still struggle with lack of time in everyone's schedules to reflect among ourselves as teachers. I think at the next program evaluation it would be good to ask students to develop questions before the evaluation. While I have learned enormously from students, volunteers, and staff, both at the Jackson Mann and at the Log School, I feel as though I still have much more to learn. I think there is sometimes a push in adult education for new and exciting tools, so at times we underestimate the value of something which is so simple.

Experiences at both Jackson Mann and the Log School have taught me that the all-program evaluation elicits information and builds community. It is a tool that, while helping us to look back, is really just a beginning.

Notes

1. Nash, A., Cason, A., Gomez-Sanford, R., McGrail, L., and Rhum, M. (in press). *Talking Shop: A Curriculum Sourcebook for Participatory Adult ESL.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Regents/Prentice Hall.

2. It is important to note that this all-program evaluation took the form of a town meeting. It was not intended as an objective tool for producing quantifiable data on how the program operates. Rather, the point was to receive feedback on program operation and share information about and responsibility for program operation.

3. Program participants at the Log School are from Cape Verde, Haiti, Latin America and the Caribbean and Vietnam. The first group did not require translation because of their more advanced English skills. For the second group, translation was provided by advanced students from the first group and a teacher who speaks Haitian Creole.

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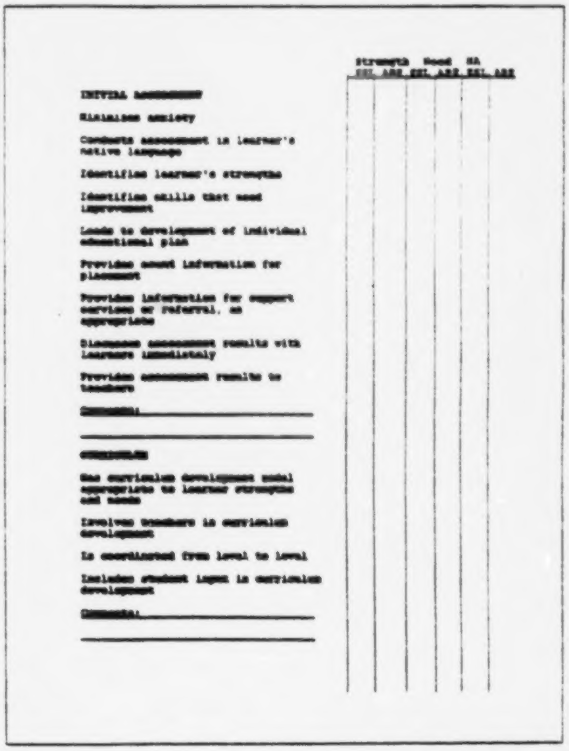
Program Evaluation at the Community Learning Center

by Mina Reddy

The Community Learning Center is the adult basic education center of the City of Cambridge. We have classes in English as a second language, basic reading, writing, and math, GED preparation, and an Adult Diploma Program. Over 1000 students a year come to the program, 60% of them for ESL. The Learning Center has 18 salaried staff members, most of them full time, and 29 part time staff. Salaried staff (teachers, counselors, and administrative staff) meet weekly in staff or departmental meetings. The CLC operates with a group decision-making process. All major decisions must be made by majority vote of the entire salaried staff. Each department (administration, ESL, and ABE/high school) selects a coordinator. The three department coordinators and the director meet every other week. They can make some limited decisions but are primarily responsible for maintaining good communication between and within departments and structuring center-wide activities like evaluations. Two student advisory committees, one for morning and one for evening students, and made up of

> *"Staff sometimes had difficulty seeing the difference between making a plan to solve a problem and solving the problem on the spot."*



	Strength		Need		NA	
	ESL	ABE	ESL	ABE	ESL	ABE
INITIAL ASSESSMENT						
Minimizes anxiety						
Conducts assessment in learner's native language						
Identifies learner's strengths						
Identifies skills that need improvement						
Leads to development of individual educational plan						
Provides enough information for placement						
Provides information for support services or referral, as appropriate						
Discusses assessment results with learners immediately						
Provides assessment results to teachers						
Comments:						
CURRICULUM						
Has curriculum development model appropriate to learner strengths and needs						
Involves teachers in curriculum development						
Is coordinated from level to level						
Includes student input in curriculum development						
Comments:						

FIGURE 1

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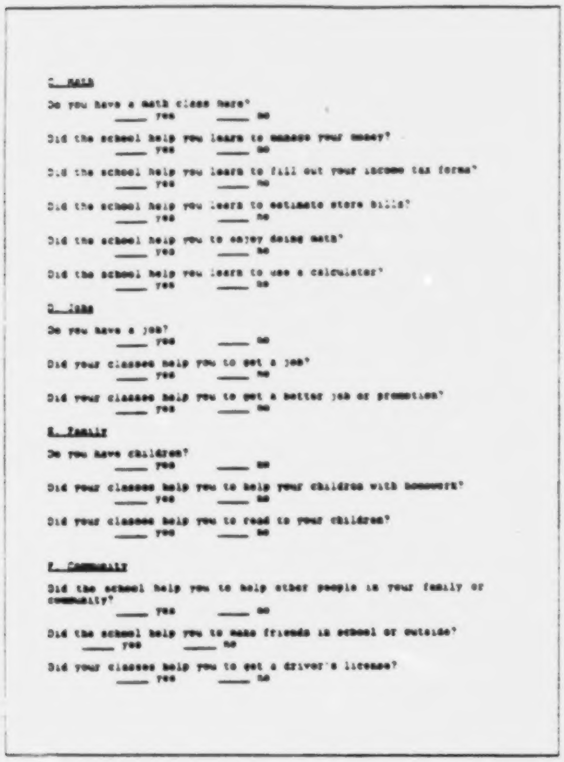

C. Math

Do you have a math class here?
___ yes ___ no

Did the school help you learn to manage your money?
___ yes ___ no

Did the school help you learn to fill out your income tax forms?
___ yes ___ no

Did the school help you learn to estimate store bills?
___ yes ___ no

Did the school help you to enjoy doing math?
___ yes ___ no

Did the school help you learn to use a calculator?
___ yes ___ no

D. Jobs

Do you have a job?
___ yes ___ no

Did your classes help you to get a job?
___ yes ___ no

Did your classes help you to get a better job or promotion?
___ yes ___ no

E. Family

Do you have children?
___ yes ___ no

Did your classes help you to help your children with homework?
___ yes ___ no

Did your classes help you to read to your children?
___ yes ___ no

F. Community

Did the school help you to help other people in your family or community?
___ yes ___ no

Did the school help you to make friends in school or outside?
___ yes ___ no

Did your classes help you to get a driver's license?
___ yes ___ no

FIGURE 2

one representative from each class, meet monthly to make suggestions to the staff and help organize activities like parties and fundraisers. Discussions led in class by these members help give students an overall picture of the school and make them feel better able to evaluate it. Informal program evaluation occurs in staff, department, coordinator, and student advisory council meetings all year. A more formal program evaluation process occurs yearly. Questionnaires are distributed to staff and students and meetings are held to discuss the results and plan program development for the following year. (see Fig. 1 and Appendix 2)

Development of the Staff Evaluation Form

In previous years, we had used a brief open-ended form for staff program evaluation. This year, in part because we had made a commitment, for the first time, to develop a three-year plan, we decided to do a more extensive process. Although we had not joined the SABES program development pilot, we asked for a copy of the materials distributed at the training for the pilot. We based our form on the "Indicators of Program Quality Checklist" developed by SABES and spent two coordinators meetings modifying it to fit our program.

Administration of the Staff Evaluation Form

The form was explained in a staff meeting and was distributed to all full and part time staff. They were told they could skip any questions about which they did not have enough information, and they were asked to star their top five priorities among needs. Part time teachers were given an additional hour of paid time to fill out the form. People took it very seriously and, in some cases, wrote extensive comments; they appreciated being asked their opinions.

The results were tallied separately for full and part time staff and then combined and all comments (15 pages of them) were typed up. Tallies and comments were distributed to all staff.

Development of the Student Evaluation Form

In February 1991, in morning and evening student advisory committee meetings, students were asked "What do you want to learn in school?" and "Does the school help you with

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anything you do outside?" Students came up with a lot of specific answers, including some that staff might not have thought of putting on a questionnaire like, "Help me enjoy reading," and "Be able to make friends." These ideas, along with a few additional ones added by teachers, were turned into questions on a checklist for students to fill out in a program evaluation questionnaire. Two problems arose, however, when the questionnaire was administered in 1991. The checklist was a long list of items with directions at the top asking students to check what the school had helped them with. In some cases, students forgot or misunderstood the directions and checked everything they were able to do even if the school had nothing to do with it. Also, students who did not have a job were checking that the school had helped them find a job and students who did not take math responded to some of the questions specifically related to activities in the math classes. The form was therefore revised last spring by breaking it up into sections, making the questions clearer, and allowing students to skip sections that were not relevant. The revision was based on feedback from teachers and a meeting between the director and two representatives of the student advisory committee. (see Fig. 2 and Appendix 3)

Administering the Student Program Evaluation Form

Copies of the form were given to all teachers to distribute and explain to students in late May. Teachers of beginning ESL students could choose not to use it if it would be too difficult for students to understand. We received 321 responses. We were fortunate to have a VISTA

Comments from the student questionnaires

- Please give other examples of what you learned in school and how the school has helped you.

"Before I came here I didn't speak English. I remember once I went to the hospital. I couldn't find an interpreter. I came back without an examination. Now I can explain everything I want."

◆

"I really learned in school, to lose the timidity, to communicate, to read a little."

◆

"This school gave me a second chance to succeed in life. I made a mistake before in not finishing school and this school gave me hope for a better future."

◆

"I learn to have an open mind by coming to school. I can think better."

◆

"The school has given me the understanding of other people and their cultures, of how diversified we all are, and that we have one common interest—to better ourselves."

◆

"Since I came back to the Learning Center it has helped me a lot. My English comes better every day. I had a promotion in my job."

volunteer to tally the responses, turn them into percentages, and type the comments—32 pages of them!

Analyzing the Data

Coordinators met to summarize the staff program evaluations and decide on the areas of greatest need for development. In order to determine the highest priorities, we considered 1) the number of people who checked an item as a need, 2) the number of stars put next to an item, and 3) comments. (Ideally, student responses would have been part of the discussion at this stage, but tallying of the forms had not yet been completed. They were available by the time action groups met.) The needs were grouped into six categories which were revised in the next staff meeting. The final categories were curriculum, counseling and follow-up, physical plant, part timer needs, staff development, funding, and assessment.

Action Groups

Two weeks had been set aside at the end of June in order to have four full days for planning and still leave enough time for our graduation and several staff development workshops. In a staff meeting the Friday before the first planning week, 1) the coordinators reported on the proposed action groups and specific issues or needs to be worked on in each one according to staff and student responses, 2) staff modified and combined the groups, and 3) each person chose one action group to participate in. Specific needs were spelled out within each category, e.g., under curriculum: math, Adult Diploma Program history, intermediate reading, and workplace education curriculum; student input into curriculum; use of textbooks; use of technology; number of hours of class per week. The groups were to meet Monday and Tuesday of the first planning week to draw up three-year plans for that area. Action plan meetings would be alternated with staff and departmental meetings. The following week, there would be two more all-day staff meetings to finalize the plan, with action groups meeting separately as needed. Each action group was given a form (see Appendix 4), lifted from a request for proposals, to write their objectives, activities, persons responsible, and timeline. Staff sometimes had difficulty seeing the difference between making a plan to solve a problem and solving the problem on the spot. Controversy arose when the assessment group wrote into the plan specific tests to be given when the staff had not agreed on the appropriateness of those tests for large numbers of students. The plan was revised to be more general and allow time to examine and select tests and set policy.

It was also difficult for staff to think in terms of a three-year plan. In part because of the nature of our funding, we have been used to thinking only one year at a time. We tended to set September 1992 as the time to accomplish an unrealistic proportion of the tasks and had to revise the timelines when we looked at all the plans together. Before ending the meetings, we set up times to monitor our progress towards our objectives over the next year. June was a difficult time to hold a series of day-long meetings because everyone was tired from the semester of teaching that had just ended. However, at the end of the process, we felt we had accomplished something significant.

Next Steps

Once the meetings were finished, the task remained of typing up the separate action plans into one document and prefacing it with a statement of strengths that were identified in the process. Most responses to both evaluations were very positive, and this was not acknowledged anywhere in this process which focused on needs and areas for development. This work will be done during the summer. When we meet again as a whole staff in September, we can make any revisions that seem appropriate at that time.

What Will We Do Next Year?

Will we use the same form and process next year? Probably not. However, we hope that this description of what we did is useful to other programs in developing their own system of program evaluation.

Starting Again

Learner-Friendly Assessment: A Workplace Model

by Joyce Jackson and Ruth Schwendeman

In late spring of 1991, a central Massachusetts manufacturing company and Worcester's Quinsigamond Community College (QCC) began to plan a workplace education program that would serve a large population of limited English speakers, many of whom had been at the company ten years or more. The company wanted a program that would not only serve a training need but would also be seen as one of the many benefits available to its employees. It was paramount that the classes be offered in a non-threatening way–that these valued workers would understand there was absolutely no risk of loss of jobs attached to their participation.

In designing the assessment and placement process, we sought to maintain and expand this goal. We believed that learner input from the inception of the program was essential for building a climate of openness and trust desired by the company. We felt that standardized tests would not, with any validity, address either the academic or affective skills of the population. As in the alternative assessment work of Elsa Auerbach and Susan Lytle, we sought to develop an intake process that would be participant friendly and which would yield information about learner abilities, interests, and uses of literacy in day-to-day life.

Climate Building

Two pre-assessment activities helped to set the stage for the individual assessment process. A task force made up of instructional staff and respected non-supervisory workers (limited English speakers as well as native English speakers) was briefed on the proposed new classes. As a means of recruitment, members of the task force were asked to share this information with their co-workers. Interested parties could then respond by signing up for the second activity, an informational group meeting where more details about the program would be presented. We expected around 50 workers to respond, but nearly 90 people signed up!

> *"We believed that learner input from the inception of the program was essential for building a climate of openness and trust desired by the company."*

Fifteen group meetings of approximately six employees and a QCC representative were conducted, each lasting 30 minutes. At these

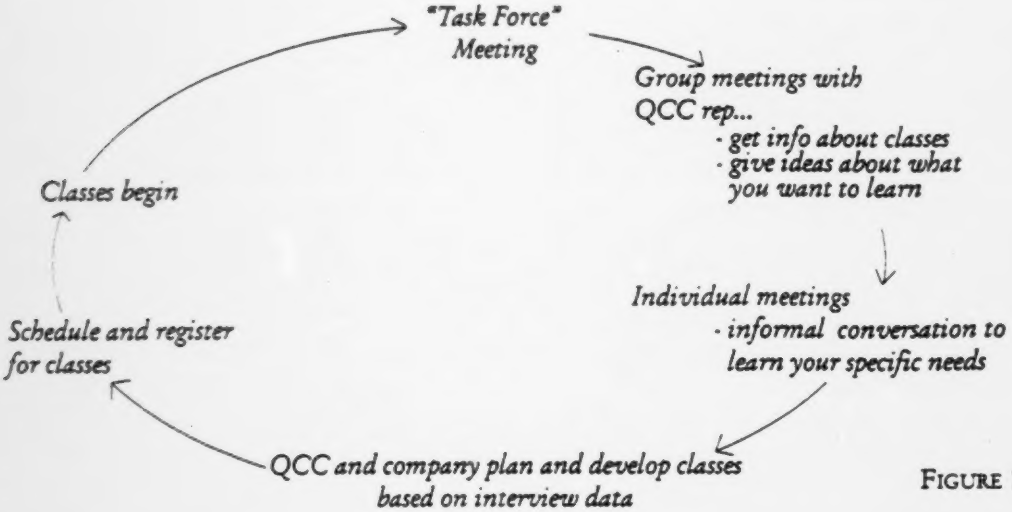

"Task Force" Meeting
Group meetings with QCC rep...
· get info about classes
· give ideas about what you want to learn
Individual meetings
· informal conversation to learn your specific needs
QCC and company plan and develop classes based on interview data
Schedule and register for classes
Classes begin

FIGURE 1

meetings, we explained the company's involvement with QCC and outlined the remaining interview and planning steps. We asked each group what they wanted to learn and what they thought their educational needs were. It was our intention to create a relaxed environment and to alleviate any fears or reservations employees may have had. We reassured groups that this educational program was entirely voluntary, was an additional benefit being offered by the company, and would not have an impact on jobs in any negative way. General information about the nature of the classes was given and sign-up forms were made available for individual assessment interviews. The schematic above was used in large form as a visual during the meetings, and was reduced and given as a handout so that the employees could think privately about the process and make a decision about participation. (see Fig. 1)

Though the one-on-one meeting was to be the major assessment activity, along the way in the task force and group meetings we were able to informally assess the population. What was especially useful from the meetings was the input we gained from the employees about their language goals and the kinds of language skills required by their jobs and home lives. Also, we began to get to know each other, which was helpful once the interviews got underway. Interviewees were relaxed because they saw a familiar face across the table.

The Interview

The interview followed a specified format, and used standardized intake forms (see Fig. 2 and Appendix 5). We made certain, however, that the workers understood what we planned to ask and how the information would be used. We tried to write as little as possible, attempting instead to make the event more of a conversation, with the participants identifying their own instead to make the event more of a conversation, with the participants identifying their own goals for language improvement. Questions focused on the employees' educational background, as well as on their current literacy activities at home and at work.

To assess reading skills, we offered a selection of materials, allowing readers to choose any piece they felt most comfortable reading silently or aloud. We followed with a brief discussion to check comprehension. If the participants so chose, a second selection could be made. (The readability levels of the selections had been pre-established, though no such identification appeared on the selections.)

To assess writing skills the workers were first asked to fill in a simple form requiring name, address, and other basic information. A second writing task asked the workers to compose a brief paragraph in response to a variety of possible writing topics, i.e., a note to their child's teacher, a phone message, etc. If the writers felt unable to complete this task, they were not required to attempt it. To maintain the non-threatening atmosphere and to preserve the learners' self esteem, occasionally the interviewers dictated a simple sentence if the learners were unable to generate one alone. In some cases, it was helpful for the interviewers to leave the room briefly while the interviewees wrote, making the writers feel less conscious about being "watched" while composing.

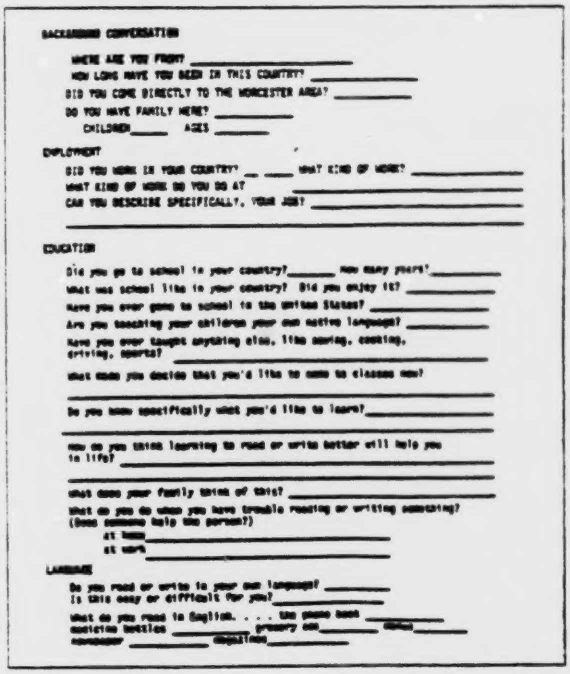
A final but essential step was to discuss the worker's placement in a class. Given the possibility of three ESL levels, the learners were asked where they would feel most comfortable. This interchange allowed the learners to be part of their own assessment, to take stock of their own skills. The interviewers also offered input on the subject, but made sure the final determination reflected the judgement of both parties.

Once the interview was complete, we again advised learners of when the program would begin and answered any questions that arose. Using the guideline, "listen now and write later," the interviewers determined 1) the skills students already had, 2) target areas for skills improvement, 3) problem areas, 4) student-identified objectives, and 5) a mutually agreed upon class level.

Results

We shared all the interview information with teachers in the program, and their curriculum planning mirrored the ability levels determined in the interviews.

This assessment procedure met our goals of



BACKGROUND CONVERSATION

WHERE ARE YOU FROM? ______
HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN IN THIS COUNTRY? ______
DID YOU COME DIRECTLY TO THE WORCESTER AREA? ______
DO YOU HAVE FAMILY HERE? ______
CHILDREN ______ AGES ______

EMPLOYMENT

DID YOU WORK IN YOUR COUNTRY? ______ WHAT KIND OF WORK? ______
WHAT KIND OF WORK DO YOU DO AT ______
CAN YOU DESCRIBE SPECIFICALLY, YOUR JOB? ______

EDUCATION

Did you go to school in your country? ______ How many years? ______
What was school like in your country? Did you enjoy it? ______
Have you ever gone to school in the United States? ______
Are you teaching your children your own native language? ______
Have you ever taught anything else, like sewing, cooking, driving, sports? ______
What made you decide that you'd like to come to classes now? ______
Do you know specifically what you'd like to learn? ______
How do you think learning to read or write better will help you in life? ______
What does your family think of this? ______
What do you do when you have trouble reading or writing something? (Does someone help the person?)
at home ______
at work ______

LANGUAGE

Do you read or write in your own language? ______
Is this easy or difficult for you? ______
What do you read in English. . . . the phone book ______
medicine bottles ______ grocery ads ______ [illegible] ______
newspaper ______ magazines ______

FIGURE 2

and tools have since been used at two other sites, and we are working to replicate the process throughout Quinsigamond's Workplace Education program. At one location, a large high-tech company, the procedure was employed under somewhat different circumstances. We used the alternative assessment format to supplement standardized placement test information previously gathered. In doing so, we were able to expand our picture of learner abilities and needs and to involve learners in self-assessment and the goal setting process.

At another site, a medium-sized tool manufacturing company, the format was used to determine the skills of a multi-leveled, native and non-native English speaking population. Information gained from the assessment process was then used to develop the pilot workplace education class at the company. In this instance, the assessment process provided a good generic tool for assessing a wide range of learner needs and abilities both ESL and ABE. Participants at this company came into the interview with a fair amount of anxiety about "going to school," but appeared to leave the assessment in a more relaxed state and with a positive attitude toward the program.

At the original location, we were fortunate to have many activities where learner input could be elicited and where informal assessment could take place. We learned that providing several opportunities for learner "buy-in," strengthened the participant's commitment to the program from inception to completion. Given the constraints of individual companies to allow for generous allocation of employee release time to attend several meetings, we realize that is not always possible. Even without such substantial initial release time, we did find that this basic alternative assessment format proved to be useful and adaptable. We do not say that it offers hard, quantitative data. That was not our goal. We felt that affective needs as well as academic skills should be addressed and that this procedure allowed us to include those elements in an initial evaluation process.

The assessment is learner friendly. It relieves much of the anxiety learners feel when they hear the word "assessment." We are still fine-tuning the process. We'd like to get beyond the stage where all ESL learners say, "I need to learn to spell," to a situation where they/we can better identify their strengths and needs. We want also to begin work on interim progress assessment tools that bear the same characteristics as the initial assessment format, helping learners to clearly articulate what they have learned, and what still needs work. The alternative assessment process is preparation for the learner-centered, cooperative learning and self-assessment model of instruction currently in use at QCC.

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Assessment and Planning: Giving Students Ownership

Amy Gluckman, Jeff Ritter, Anne Mullen and Kathy Lento

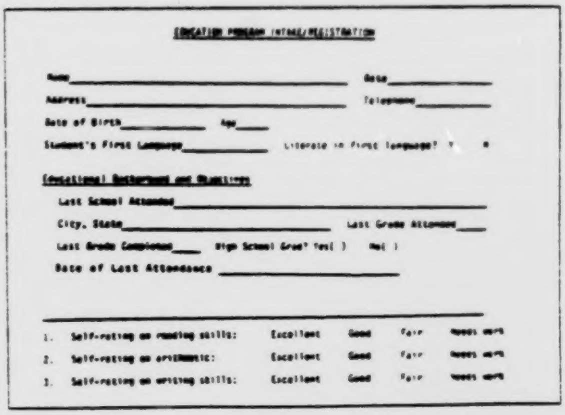
Just A Start is a comprehensive community service organization. Each part of Just A Start has an educational component. One Stop is for out-of-school young people, aged 16-21, who are interested in job readiness, carpentry and painting skills training, and education. Futures for Young Parents involves pregnant and parenting teens in GED preparation and career exploration. The Evening School meets three nights a week and is open to all adults in the community who want to work toward taking their GED tests. Each of these programs strives toward having individualized learning programs and a student-centered curriculum.

Many of our students are not ready to begin GED preparation. These students are placed in pre-GED classes, and it will be many months or perhaps years before they will be able to pass the GED. For this reason, last year we began to explore ways in which these students could see how they were making progress toward their long-term goal, and how they were accomplishing short-term goals. We began looking at various instruments that would allow the students to set their own goals and become the planners and owners of their accomplishments. Teachers would provide the tools, but the students would be responsible for using them in a way that best met their needs. Both teachers and students would gain some freedom from complete reliance on the standardized testing required by our funders.

The development process took many months. SABES provided descriptions of the student-centered goal setting and assessment procedures that other Massachusetts programs had developed, along with copies of the instruments they had created. Using these as a model, we developed an intake and ongoing assessment process that would be more student-centered than our current approach.

The Process

The assessment procedure we developed includes an extensive intake process along with



EDUCATION PROGRAM INTAKE/REGISTRATION

Name__________ Date__________

Address__________ Telephone__________

Date of Birth__________ Age____

Student's First Language__________ Literate in First Language? Y N

Educational Background and Questions

Last School Attended__________

City, State__________ Last Grade Attended____

Last Grade Completed____ High School Grad? Yes( ) No( )

Date of Last Attendance__________

1. Self-rating on reading skills: Excellent Good Fair Needs work
2. Self-rating on arithmetic: Excellent Good Fair Needs work
3. Self-rating on writing skills: Excellent Good Fair Needs work

FIGURE 1

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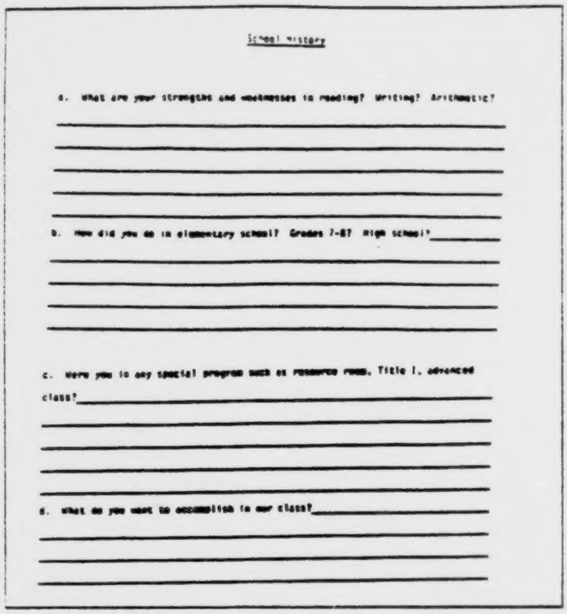

School History

a. What are your strengths and weaknesses in reading? Writing? Arithmetic?

b. How did you do in elementary school? Grades 7-8? High school?

c. Were you in any special program such as resource room, Title I, advanced class?

d. What do you want to accomplish in our class?

FIGURE 2

periodic review of individual student's goals and progress in one-on-one meetings.

Intake Assessment: Some of our programs are open-entry/open-exit while others have definite cycles. In either case, the teacher and the new student sit down together and fill out the Intake Registration form. (see Fig. 1-2 and Appendix 6) This form asks students to rate their own skills in reading, writing, and math. It also asks about their educational history. Next, students are asked to write a paragraph on any topic to give the teacher an idea of the student's skill in writing and to provide a sample to which later writings can be compared.

Within the first week of class, the students fill out the Student Learning Goals form. (see Fig. 3 and Appendix 7) This eight-page form lists a wide range of skills, subjects and practical activities that students might want to do or learn. Finally, new students take a standardized test; over the past year we have used both the SRA and the TABE.

Once the student has been in class for two or three weeks, the student and teacher have a meeting. At this time, we look over the student's goals, interests, test results, and any other information. Together, we make a plan for the next eight to twelve weeks using the Educational Goals Plan and Progress Record. (see Fig. 4 and Appendix 8) The Goals Plan describes what each student will be working on over the next few months and where each hopes to be at the end of that time.

Ongoing Assessment: As students continue in class, the teacher and the students use the information on the Goals Plan to develop weekly or biweekly assignment sheets which are kept in the students' notebooks. In order to keep track of the work students have done, they fill out the daily log[1] at the end of each day; students keep these logs in their notebooks as well. Then, after two or three months in the class, the teacher meets with students individually. At this meeting, the Goals Plan is reviewed and updated, and a new plan for the next period is written. The purpose of these periodic meetings is to give students an opportunity to appreciate what they have accomplished, to discuss any problems that the student or the teacher may be having, and to plan goals and work for the next few months (see Fig. 5 and Appendix 9).

Looking Back

This description of the assessment process we developed summarizes what we planned to do more accurately than what we actually did. In practice, different teachers have found different parts of the assessment plan to be more or less useful and more or less feasible. Below,

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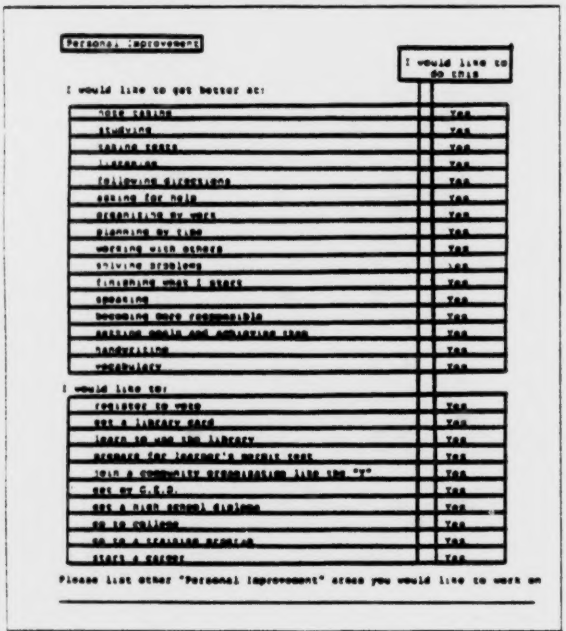
three of the teachers discuss their experiences with the process and how the tools worked in practice.

JEFF: The One Stop Program

My overall experience with the assessment methods we developed at Just A Start has been positive. The Daily Log has been a great help. I can see the students' amazement at how much work they have done in a day. They also express some dismay if they realize that they have not produced much. The Student Learning Goals is always helpful as a reference for both me and the students when they need to reignite their motivation or remind themselves of something they committed to earlier. The weekly Assignment Sheets have been the least useful. The week is really an unknown quantity on a Monday and there is no reason to expect or want everything on a lesson plan to get accomplished. Most weeks, something unexpected occurs that precludes finishing the assignments. Spontaneous lessons usually turn out to be better learning experiences.



Personal Improvement

I would like to get better at:

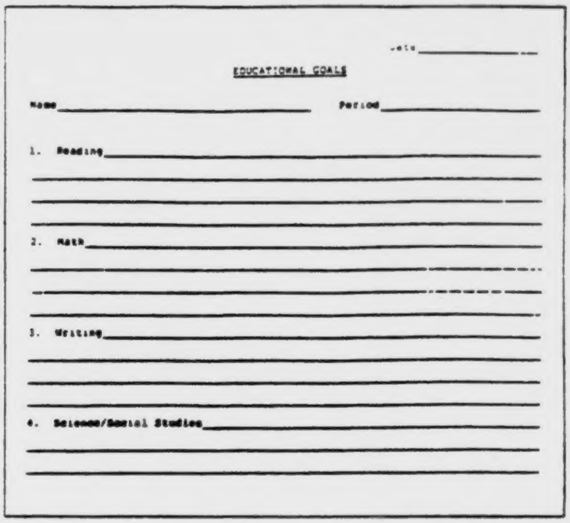
	I would like to do this
note taking	Yes
studying	Yes
taking tests	Yes
listening	Yes
following directions	Yes
asking for help	Yes
organizing my work	Yes
planning my time	Yes
working with others	Yes
solving problems	Yes
finishing what I start	Yes
speaking	Yes
becoming more responsible	Yes
setting goals and achieving them	Yes
handwriting	Yes
vocabulary	Yes

I would like to:

register to vote	Yes
get a library card	Yes
learn to use the library	Yes
prepare for learner's permit test	Yes
join a community organization like the "Y"	Yes
get my G.E.D.	Yes
get a high school diploma	Yes
go to college	Yes
go to a training program	Yes
start a career	Yes

Please list other "Personal Improvement" areas you would like to work on

FIGURE 3



Date__________

EDUCATIONAL GOALS

Name____________________ Period__________

1. Reading____________________

2. Math____________________

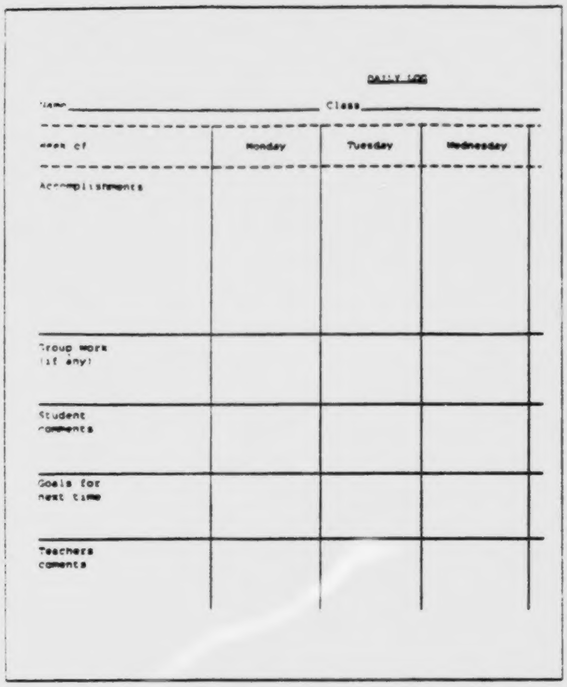
3. Writing____________________

4. Science/Social Studies____________________

FIGURE 4

KATHY: The Futures for Young Parents Program

Of all the materials generated by this project, I found the Student Learning Goals list to be the least helpful. The form itself is confusing; it is long and a bit repetitive. The students are not always sure how to respond and don't feel it is helpful either. I would like for us to develop something shorter, that is filled out with the student. I think the Daily Log has the potential to work well and be useful for many things. The problem is in reminding the students to fill it out and in giving them feedback on what they have written. The Weekly Assignment Sheet is good, although it could be more closely connected to the daily log. We are trying



DAILY LOG

Name____________________ Class________________

Week of	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
Accomplishments			
Group work (if any)			
Student comments			
Goals for next time			
Teachers coments			

FIGURE 5

to devise a system where the sheets are more accessible to teachers so that they are actually filled out in a timely way. The Goals Plan works the best. It takes a long time for students to really feel that they want to be involved in setting goals for themselves.

AMY: The Futures for Young Parents Program

Overall, I think that the process of thinking about setting and assessing goals in a student-centered way has been helpful to me as a teacher. Ironically, it has probably forced me to acknowledge that I don't believe as completely in a student-centered approach as I might have thought–that there are some things that I want the students to learn and some goals that I want them to have whatever they think about it!

The process and instruments that we are now (trying to) use have, I think, been helpful to the students, although it is hard always to know how and how much. The Goals Plan, along with the one-on-one meetings at which it is filled out, is the most important to my mind. We have had a hard time scheduling these one-on-one meetings, so they have not been held as regularly as we planned. (We are planning to build time slots for them into our 1992-93 schedule.) Still, when a student seemed to feel discouraged about progress, pulling out the Goals Plan and reviewing it was a perfect thing to do. Listing everything that the student had accomplished in the previous two or three months helped the student feel better about being in school, and planning out the next few months made the path toward getting a GED seem finite.

The Daily Log is also helpful, primarily in helping the students stay in touch with what they are doing. When I first started using the logs, there was a noticeable drop in the number of students who came in every day with a "spaced-out" look on their faces saying, "Now, what am I working on in here?" The Student Learning Goals list has not been very helpful. The Futures students don't seem to like it, and they rarely check off anything on it. I believe it could be improved by cutting down the number of skills and topics and adding some more light-hearted ones. I also think that many of the students honestly do not feel themselves to be interested in anything that one could learn about in school, and may not until they get older or their interest is somehow sparked by the teacher.

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The Process Continues

The process we began last year will continue for a long time. As the months go by, we focus more on some of the questions that were left out of our initial discussions: How do we manage the logistics of using the forms and hold individual meetings? How do we adapt learner-centered assessment ideas developed through working with adults to the young people we serve? These questions will no doubt lead us to reassess and change our approach in the future.

Note

1. Adapted from Germanoski, M. "The Education Goals Assessment Packet," Adventures in Assessment Vol. I, p. 33-36.

What Counts?

a continuing feature on math assessment

The "Whole-Person" Approach in Math Assessment[1]

by Mary Jane Schmitt and Helen Jones

Math is not an isolated activity, something which adults do only when confronted with taking a test or demonstrating a competency. Mathematics is a dynamic process, one that is rich and diverse, one that involves gathering information, exploring ideas, discovering relationships, identifying patterns, and making connections. We believe that by talking about and teaching math in this way, adult learners will come to value mathematics, be confident in their ability to do math, become real-life problem solvers, and learn how to reason and communicate mathematically.[2]

What's Wrong with this Picture?

An adult learner walks tentatively into an ABE math classroom and is greeted warmly by the teacher. The other learners move over to make some room. The atmosphere is comfortable and accepting. After introductions, the teacher approaches the new arrival with a basic math assessment (computation and word problems), and asks the learner to try some of the problems. She explains that her goal here is to find out what the adult learner remembers and where s/he needs to start reviewing.

What's wrong with this picture? Nothing at all, unless this is all you do to assess your students' knowledge and past experience with math. Computational tests are helpful but they can't provide all the information you need. To plan the most effective learning activities and create the right kind of learning environment, consider taking a "whole-person" approach in the initial math assessment.

The following nine factors are important to consider when creating an individual's learning plan:

Factor 1
Emotions and Attitudes

Factor 2
Long and Short-Term Goals

Factor 3
Everyday Math Experiences

Factor 4
Computational and Problem-Solving Processes

Factor 5
Math Skill Level

Factor 6
Reading Level

Factor 7
Cultural Background

Factor 8
Learning Pace and Style

Factor 9
Perceptual Disabilities or Strengths

Questions for Reflection

- How openly do we talk about math and past experiences with math in the classroom?
- What information do I need to know about my students and what are some ways I can elicit that information?
- Ultimately, how do I incorporate this information into my instruction so that I build upon the learners' knowledge?
- Do I start each learner "where s/he's at," neither overestimating nor underestimating his or her abilities?
- How do I know when my students are not "getting it?"

FIGURE 1

FACTOR 1: Emotions and Attitudes

Many learners have had negative experiences with math; it's important for you to recognize this and to open up your classroom for sharing "math memories"—your students' and your own. Keeping a math journal is one way learners can record their thoughts and feelings about doing math, while also describing what they're learning in class.

Students who are math anxious often have developed coping mechanisms to deal with their fears: panicking when faced with a word problem, saying, "I hate math," or, "I can't do math," or hiding how they get an answer because they fear it's "not the right way." It's important to acknowledge this "emotional" information and to deal with it in your classroom.

Let students know that you are fully confident in their ability to do math, and encourage them to insist upon "getting it." They should be comfortable in telling you when they're confused. Agree upon a signal, like holding up a pencil, to let you know if something doesn't make sense. Ask questions along the way to check comprehension. Remember, keep the dialogue going.

Reflect on your feelings about math. If you are at all uncomfortable with math, think about how your own math anxiety plays out. What kind of messages do you give your students Do you go too much by the book because you're afraid to make a mistake? It's best to be honest and to learn *with* your students. (see Fig. 1)

FACTOR 2: Long and Short-Term Goals

It is critical to know why a learner has come back to school. Knowing your students' goals will help you develop and guide the overall curriculum. This is information the teacher keeps in mind as s/he begins instructional planning.

Setting up a plan that enables students to achieve their long-term goals is a critical next step. Some outside research on your part may be necessary. If a student wants to go to nursing school, for example, get a sample of the entrance exam and learn about the entrance requirements. You can find copies of current nursing textbooks and get a feel for the content of the course work.

Be skeptical of exam preparation books. Go to the source, if you can. If the student wants to take the GED, get the Official Practice Tests and teacher's guide that come directly from the GED Testing Service.

Don't forget about short-term goals. They are critical benchmarks of progress. The learner who wants to be a nurse, for example, can work toward the short-term goal of learning the metric system. Also, students' goals may change over time, so be sure to check in periodically.

FACTOR 3: Everyday Math Experiences

Asking learners to think of ways they've used math in the past month is a good activity to initiate for many reasons. It opens up discussion, and allows learners to see the many ways they use math every day. A typical list might include:

- doubling a recipe
- figuring sales tax
- building a porch
- measuring baby formula
- grocery shopping
- catching a bus
- balancing a checkbook
- punching a time card
- analyzing a paycheck
- checking change
- measuring food for intake (in the case of a diabetic)
- looking for an apartment

Keep track of the information your students provide, and use it in your instruction. Mathematics is about making connections, and good lessons start with experiences students can relate to.

FACTOR 4: Computational and Problem-Solving Processes

Observing and listening to how students solve problems, and affirming their strategies is important. Students should know early on that there are many ways to reach a solution, and that the best way is that which makes most sense to them.

Acceptance of learners' calculating methods does not mean that you should accept all answers or off-the-wall thinking. First, find out how the learner arrived at that answer before you challenge or correct him or her. Try to understand the logic behind each learner's approach. The more you listen to and respect the particular way of reasoning, the easier the teaching and learning process will be. (see Fig. 2)

FACTOR 5: Math Skill Level

It's important to know if your students know the four operations on whole numbers, fractions, and decimals, and whether they can use these skills in context. That's why we usually start out with a computational math assessment.

Be skeptical of this assessment process, though; it is not an exact science. Even in your best attempts, you may underestimate or overestimate a learner's skill level or potential. A student who can't divide, for example, may be able to solve algebra problems.

FACTOR 6: Reading Level

Math will never make any sense if language gets in the way. It's important that word problems be within the learners' vocabulary and comprehension level. Also, when integrating reading, writing, and math in your curriculum, be sure to consider the learners' abilities in all three areas. However, don't let low reading levels prevent you from teaching math. If you are working with new readers, present problems orally in groups, or tape-record problems for new readers to work with. There are ways to teach math successfully to learners who are at varying reading levels.

Here are some ways to make the initial math assessment more accessible to the learner.

ALLOW the learner to use a variety of computational processes: paper and pencil, mental math, manipulatives (concrete objects), or a calculator.

LIMIT the number of items on the initial assessment to 25, and the amount of time spent with the test to one half hour. Adults returning to school don't need to encounter a comprehensive test that shows them how much they don't know or don't remember.

WRITE each problem on a "3 x 5" card. Ask the learner to separate the cards into three piles: (a) I definitely know how to do these; (b) I'm not sure; (c) I definitely don't know how to do these.

ASK the student to write "twenty-one" as many ways as s/he can. This will give you some idea of his or her sophistication with numbers. For example, "7 x 3" or "20 + 1" is not as sophisticated as "19.9 + 1.1" or "$\sqrt{400} + \sqrt{1}$".

ASK students to write word problems using the computation problems on the test.

TALK about the test and the strategies used to solve problems. Remember, communication is an integral part of doing math.

FIGURE 2

FACTOR 7: Cultural Background

U.S. METHOD OF DIVIDING DECIMALS:	SOME OTHER COUNTRIES:
$4.2\,\overline{)\,14.68}$	$14{,}68\,\overline{)\,14{,}2}$

FIGURE 3

Many approaches to doing basic math are fairly universal. However, some major cultural differences do exist. (see Fig. 3) For example, learners who attended schools in a Spanish-, French-, or Portuguese-speaking country may write "two thousand" as "2.000," and write "two" as "2,000." Also, their method for subtraction may not involve the concept of "borrowing." In some countries, division is also done differently. Measurement systems also vary by country. Many countries use the metric system, so you may need to use 12-inch rulers and yardsticks to show the customary units of measure in the United States. When working with students try to learn the methods they were taught. Have students from the same country tutor each other. In the classroom, build on the students' methods if you can. Don't insist on their learning new algorithms if their own methods work just as well.

If the students have children in American schools, talk about how math is taught in the United States. You can create interesting multicultural math lessons using this information.

FACTOR 8: Learning Pace and Style

People learn at different rates. That's a fact of life! So, many adult learning centers provide individualized instruction to ensure that learners have enough time to absorb the material.

Watch out for this. Instruction that is completely individualized can be isolating. By pairing students who learn at similar paces, or by forming small work groups, you can provide for an enriching and cooperative learning experience.

Adults also have many different learning styles. In the ABE classroom, some learners are self-directed, whereas others need continual support from the teacher. Some learners prefer to work alone, just as others learn best in small groups. Observe your students, and learn how they work best.

Consider your own teaching style. Are you directive or facilitative? Does your teaching style match the learning styles of most of your students? These are some issues you ought to take into account.

FACTOR 9: Perceptual Disabilities or Strengths

Many teachers are familiar with the following patterns: A learner has difficulty memorizing the times tables, is unable to pay attention to "+, -, x, ÷" symbols, or can't line up decimal points. The list goes on. These may be symptoms of a visual perception disability.

If a learner has problems following oral directions, or has difficulty counting out loud, s/he may have an auditory deficit. Although they do not account for all problems, learning disabilities certainly do exist. It is well worth your time to learn more about this important issue.

Just as you should be aware of possible disabilities, it is equally important to build on students perceptual strengths. In your instruction, include the kinesthetic, visual, and auditory learning modalities.

Summary

Good teaching begins with good assessment and improves with appropriate and continuous evaluation. A whole-person approach to math assessment takes into account not only the learners' "pencil and paper" skills, but also their feelings about math and everyday approaches to problem-solving.

Notes

1. This article is excerpted from the viewer's guide which accompanies the training video, "Changing the Rules: Teaching Math to Adult Learners," available from New Readers Press.

   The video demonstrates four key ideas to improve adult basic mathematics instruction. These include using a "whole-person" approach to student assessment; integrating concrete learning activities into classroom instruction; using real-life math problems that have relevance to adults' daily lives; and finally, using a spiral approach to teach math content.

2. These goals are also outlined by the "National Council of Teachers of Mathematics in Curriculum and Evaluation Standards for Mathematics", NCTM (March, 1989).

Voices from the Field

Creating Change or Creating Accessibility: A Dialogue

with Lindy Whiton and Loren McGrail

In January, 1992, the Bureau of Adult Education (BAE) of the Massachusetts Department of Education initiated the GOALS Project, a field test of 10 varied components designed to lead to the development of an Accountability System for adult basic education programs in Massachusetts. The purpose of the GOALS Project according to Sandy Brawders, Supervisor of Development, BAE, is to "define a set of indicators of program quality which are educationally sound, useful to students, teachers and funders, and not excessively time-consuming."

Component 3 of the GOALS Project is working with 11 programs using alternative forms of assessment. Lindy Whiton, Coordinator of Component 3, describes the theoretical and philosophical basis of Component 3 as follows:

"We all believe in learner's goals being not only important, but a driving force in our curriculum; thus, our assessment practices are based on the individual goals of the learners as well as the goals of the individual programs. Whether we are teaching ABE, GED, or ESL, we believe that literacy practices have to directly relate to not only the goals of learners, but their immediate lives." (Whiton, Component 3, First Draft, p. 1) Based on these beliefs, each of the 11 programs in Component 3 "have developed assessment/evaluation tools that take into consideration who their learners are, who their teachers are, the goals of their learners, their interests, and how they use literacy in their daily lives." (*Ibid.*)

The following conversation with Lindy Whiton was conducted at the beginning of the summer of 1992 with Loren McGrail, editor of *Adventures in Assessment*. Minimal changes have been made to the original transcript so that the flavor of the dialogue could be retained.

Component 1 of the GOALS Project uses standardized tools to measure student progress. Before we begin talking about Component 3, could you please talk about Component 1?

Component 1 is set up so that you collect profile information on an intake of a student, everything from race to past educational experience to work history. What you do in the very beginning is to give the CASAS* pre-test and you get a score from the CASAS test and then people go about their normal lives and their programs track only participation and attendance. Then–I think it's every six weeks, but I'm not positive–they do another CASAS to test whether there has been growth. Now that's one track. The idea is to see whether competency-based tests will determine whether or not a learner is meeting their goals [as defined by competencies]. This is only being tested for ABE learners right now. Then they will compare this information with student participation by looking at attendance scores. They'll be able to look at CASAS quantitative markings and see whether or not learners are reaching their goals, thus [find out if] programs are fulfilling their duties/responsibilities.

Compared to Component 1, what is the difference in design or intent of Component 3?

Well, there was no way you could measure what happens in a Component 3 program with the tools that they were using to measure Component 1. What we decided was that the method in which we did Component 3 should reflect the theoretical foundations of those [participating] programs. If I was going to run a component that used alternative assessment and participatory approaches or whole language approaches, then I'd better run that component in the same methodological way.

I've completely allowed the programs to determine what we're doing and what we're collecting. When we first got together I led them through a couple of activities just to get them to talk about assessment and evaluation and what the difference is between assessment and evaluation. What do you mean when you talk about evaluation? What do you mean when you talk about assessment? There were a lot of us in the room that day, not only program people, so there were a lot of different perspectives. It was exciting. People fought. I mean there was just a sort of fighting back and forth and really getting into it. The idea was to create a kind of community quickly and trust in that fighting, that it was okay. What it did was lay out where people were coming from, their theoretical foundations came out immediately. You can't evaluate, you can't use a test that is totally skills-based to measure a curriculum that is not skills-based. Those kind of issues came out immediately, so that we all knew where we stood in that realm. Then they decided as a group the thing to do next was to meet again and share with each other what each program did on intake, ongoing, and final evaluation of learners, teachers, classrooms, and programs. They shared them all and then they sent me away with the task of putting it together in some sort of order and writing up a paper that explains what their foundation is, what those three pieces are. I used Elsa [Auerbach's] and your stuff [framework for *Adventures in Assessment:* getting started, ongoing, and looking back] to organize the notebook.

---

* The Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System is "a comprehensive educational assessment system designed to measure competency-based curriculum for all levels of Adult Basic Education and English as a Second Language, including a pre-vocational curriculum." (CASAS Overview, p.1) CASAS "measures functional basic skills in Reading, Math, and Listening Comprehension, utilizing an Item Bank of more than 5,000 multiple-choice test items. CASAS also includes authentic or applied performance measures on oral proficiency, writing skills, pre-employment and work maturity competence, and critical thinking skills." (CASAS, Training Workshop Handouts, 1990, p. 8d)

You said there was kind of a discussion about differences in assessment and evaluation. Did you come to consensus about these differences?

No. And we allowed it not to come to consensus. We were all sort of split and in the end made the decision that we all agreed upon what the concepts were, but not the labels for those concepts.

And what were those concepts?

We looked at assessment as something you did [on an] ongoing [basis]–something you did daily like a learning log or a teaching log that you daily put your perceptions on what happened. That was assessment. Evaluation was at the end of the cycle looking at doing miscue analysis, doing a program evaluation of the whole class. What were your strengths? Looking back at larger things...Some people switch the two concepts around so that they were calling evaluation what you and I call assessment.

So you decided not to quibble over the terms, but just made sure those concepts were...

...agreed upon.

Wasn't it true that you decided not to have people other than the participants in your component come to the meetings?

The group made the decision to ask that other people not come and that we allow ourselves the privacy to discuss what does happen...Issues needed to be talked about within the group without anybody overseeing...Like some of these tools have been developed but not put into practice unfortunately. Programs struggle with how to fit this into part-time teacher status. I think some of the programs feel that they have very strong intake procedures–and they do–and that their curriculum is very good, and they sort of have a hard time teaching math, and they don't have any means of evaluating anything they do–so what they'd like to be able to do is say *this* is the help we need. *This* is where we think we are weak. We're definitely strong here. These are not reasons to not get refunded.

So your belief is that they are worried about giving out information and letting...

I think they are worried about it now and the idea is to find a way to open up that dialogue. The answer to that question will then become: "This is who you should call at SABES," or "Here is this resource to help you develop/strengthen this piece."

In Component 1, learner goals are matched with competencies from the CASAS competency list. How are these goals identified in Component 3?

The majority–this is where the uniqueness of the programs come into play–ask the learners what their goals are. They may start with them at the beginning of a cycle or they may plug them into a certain part later in the cycle so the curriculum is determined by those goals.

So then there's more of a direct relationship between the curriculum and those goals?

The Log School is probably the most direct. [see p. 11] When they get a group of people in, they take those goals...that are most in common across all learners [and that] is where they start their curriculum. So that's the theme or the focus that they start in and then it goes on from there. The participants direct where the curriculum goes. In the end the students do the evaluation: Did your goals get met? Where do you think the strengths of the program lay? Where do you think it could be stronger? They ask them directly instead of trying to determine some competency that they standardized.

How does a curriculum that is already set up fit in with an approach that tries to find out what the learner's goals are? Wouldn't that be the same problem or configuration as Component 1 where there is something pre-designed to meet something that is coming from the learners?

In Component 3 there are three programs or four where that is true. I think that the Quincy School would say that people's goals are to learn English and that they have a standard way of doing that. One of the reasons that they chose to participate in this particular component is that they're interested in changing their assessment policies.

And changing that attitude?

Yeah. There seem to be reasons to keep it and reasons to get rid of it and they, as a staff, are having that debate. So they asked to be part of that larger debate.

Then not everyone in Component 3 is already doing alternative assessment? There are people who are coming into it because they want to?

Well, Quincy School defines themselves as doing alternative assessment because they made up their own tools. They don't use anything published.

So there are two definitions of alternative assessment?

Right. And what's been real interesting to me is the dialogue that's been going on between the programs...You might be able to use Component 1 on the Quincy School as it stands now but not on Read/Write Now.

Are you saying that because there was no operative definition for alternative assessment to start with, people chose this component because they felt they were doing alternative assessment and because they wanted to make a change?

Yes.

...And that the Department of Education made their selection based on wanting some of those programs who wanted to change to be in the company of others who have already made the change?

Yes. And what I think may be possible–this isn't in writing yet–but I think that what we'll do is once we [complete this research], we'll get ten other programs that are in the same spot who want that change but need help developing their tools and adapting them to their own programs.

Are you saying you all would act as mentors?

Yes.

One of your discoveries is that program-based assessment does not necessarily mean alternative assessment if it's following the same theoretical principles as those of standardized tests which are primarily skills-based. I think this is the middle ground where most of the state is. It's almost as if there is a missing component in the GOALS project–program based assessment–and its showing up in Component 3. Program-based *assessment does* *not necessarily mean* alternative assessment. *It means alternative to standardized testing. So maybe we should stop using the word "alternative" and use something like "authentic" or "learner centered" or "participatory" to make the distinction.*

Yeah. I think that's a good point. I think it is true that when we chose programs to go into Component 3, we chose a few of one kind and a majority of learner-centered.

Do you see a pattern among people who have either been through some university training or influenced by universities in the development of the kind of tools that are developed?

I think the majority of the people in Component 3 have been influenced by either Boston University or the University of Massachusetts. I think that's part of the difference between Components 1 and 3.

Are there other themes or issues that have emerged?

There are two fears...the group [has]. One is if you develop these things–tools–are they just going to become standardized? [Another is:] How do you teach part-time teachers how to use these types of tools which will [eventually] fit their particular populations? Are we just going to find Janet Kelly's stuff all over the place without any adjustment made to who we are serving?

...Who they're serving and what type of literacy they are practicing? It seems to me one of the other fears, which may or may not be yours, is that people will take tools and impose them upon teaching situations that are not...

...meant to be measured.

In fact, they would be better measured with more standardized tools because of the ways in which they are teaching.

Right, I think that's true.

Maybe that's not a concern of the group's but maybe more of yours?

Well, I think the group is looking at how to...literally, physically create that toolkit and create little abstracts on why this tool works best in this type of situation. You won't have an SRA* box full of tools, but rather a way that helps people say, "I want to know whether my students are getting the connections between what they're writing and what they're reading..."

It seems to me one of the real benefits that Component 3 could give all of the other components is a deeper and richer understanding of what goals are, who the learner is in relationship to their own goals and some really appropriate ways in which that gets measured for the learner's sake. Do you see that as part of your agenda or is that an agenda of anyone in your group? From my viewpoint, that's the piece of research which I think could be very helpful to the Bureau.

What I'm trying to do is create a system that allows people who think like Component 1 to understand the benefit of Component 3. If you change the language and the whole way in which you talk about it entirely and leave nothing for comparison, then you leave no access into your ideas. If what I can do is create this line of data that is comparable in the same way [as the other components] then it gives the Bureau–and everybody–access to what you and I think are the important issues. I've got to create comparable data in a research/quantitative way.

---

* Science Research Associates (1968-1986) - graded reading passages with multiple choice comprehension questions.

Even though you have a totally different theoretical basis, you still think you can compare data?

I can create access into the more important meat. Once you can get a hold of this understanding then things like understanding that we are not tracking learners...

...but following their tracks...

...becomes more easily understood by somebody who thinks like this. Otherwise we'll get thrown out as hippies.

Well, it's the classic argument. Who needs to change what according to whom? I guess I'm suggesting that your criteria and values and your ways of looking at goals should not change.

I'm not disagreeing with you.

Well you kind of are.

I'm saying that we need to go slower–that we can't change them until they understand us. Before [we] create change, we have to create accessibility.

Letter

Keeping Assessment Out of Program Accountability

The search for alternative methods for measuring the progress of adult learners started with dissatisfaction with standardized tests in measuring the many different and important ways in which adults learn. The alternative approaches to measuring student progress that have been explored in Adventures in Assessment may soon be recognized as acceptable alternatives to standardized tests, and this offers the hope that assessment will become a more valuable experience for learners and teachers. Unfortunately, these new tools may become part of the program accountability systems used by funding agencies to judge whether or not their money is being well spent.

Last year Sondra Stein and I published an article in *Adult Learning* ("How a College and University Model Could Be Used to Judge Program Effectiveness, " Sept. 1991, Vol. 3, No. 1) that suggested an accreditation approach to measuring program effectiveness for accountability purposes. Our intent was less to promote the accreditation model than to argue for dropping student assessment from the program accountability process. Using student progress as a measure of program effectiveness can cause programs to seek out those students who can do well on a curriculum that teaches to a standardized test or to formulate curriculum to prepare students to pass the test.

An accountability system must compare a program against a standard measure of impact in order to assess whether it is doing well or poorly. If alternative assessment approaches are integrated into an accountability system, these tools will eventually be required to perform like standardized tests and provide measures that can judge a program against some standard. Only standardized, comparable measures can serve as a measure of program effectiveness.

A program should be concerned with improving its standard of service rather than recruiting students who will be successful or training students to be successful on a standardized test. Student assessment should take place, but it should be designed to produce measures of progress that serve the needs of students and teachers, not the needs of a program to secure funding. Using student assessment as the measure of effectiveness for program accountability, no matter how good the assessment tool, will always make the test result the focus of programs rather than the needs of the student.

Funding agencies do have a legitimate right to measure the effectiveness of the programs they fund. But, looking at student progress does not necessarily provide a way to judge whether or not money is being well spent. Some of the existing standardized assessment tools are good measures of student progress in acquisition of skills or competencies, but the impact on a student's life could be in areas not measured by the assessment tool. Though progress as measured by tests might come slowly for some students, positive changes in their lives could be occurring.

Judging a program against standards of practice and service can give an indication of how well money is being spent. If a program has all of the elements of good practice and service, then students who enter and remain in the program should be doing about as well as they can. Just as higher education programs are judged on the quality of their teachers, curriculum, materials, administration, and equipment–adult basic education should be measured by the elements of its programs. The accreditation model used by colleges and universities does not rely on student assessment. Why should ABE programs be judged by student performance?

Assessment of student progress is now serving as a "red herring," drawing attention away from the need for staff development and program development. Time and money is being put into the development and implementation of models for measuring student progress, many of them useful and effective, while little attention is paid to evaluating and improving the quality of service. Assessments of student progress are essential to managing learning, but they should not drive the system. Rather, they should be an integral part of a good system. The need for ABE services will be with us for decades, and we need a model for measuring accountability that focuses attention on building effective institutions.

ABE practitioners who are interested in promoting alternative assessment must pay attention to the context in which assessment takes place. If the context is part of the funding process, then standardized measures will be needed. A better option would be to change and improve the system of measuring program effectiveness so that measures of student progress were not part of the funding process. The assessment tools, then, could serve the needs of students and teachers, and the program accountability system could focus on improving service.

John P. Comings
Vice President
World Education, Inc.
210 Lincoln Street
Boston, MA

Corrections

Volume 2, p. 1
The title on David J. Rosen's article should have read "Presentation Portfolio."

Volume 2, p. 74
Appendix 4 was incorrectly identified. See reverse for correct form.

Name ______________________ ________________ Date ___ ________________

Yesterday, we wrote about Carol. Carol was in Room 6 when Janet was away.

You and Yer wrote on the blackboard.

When Carol came to Room 6, we learned English.
We wrote stories about ourselves. We studied past, future and present ten
We were talking about what we did, what we are doing and what we will do.
We made groups and talked about pictures and we wrote the stories about th
pictures.

What do you like to do in Room 6?

1. write about pictures — not very much — some — OK — a lot
2. write in journals — not very much — some — OK — a lot
3. write at the blackboard together — not a lot — some — OK — a lot
4. read stories that other students write — not very much — some — OK — a lot
5. read stories from books or magazines — not very much — some — OK — a lot
6. speak English together — not very much — some — OK — [✓ a lot]

Please write other ideas you have about our class:

[illegible]
[illegible] I wrote [illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]

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Appendices

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QUESTIONS FOR PROGRAM EVALUATION

1. Are the classes meeting your needs?

2. Are the levels good?

3. Are there other classes you would like in the program? What classes?

4. Are the class times good for you?

   Do you know people who would like classes in the morning?

   Do you know people who would like classes at night?

5. Sometimes students stop coming to classes? Why?

6. What can everyone (students and teachers) do to help students continue classes?

7. In addition to classes we have child care, field trips, and some special projects. What other things would you like to see in the program?

Appendix 2

Name ____________________

Community Learning Center
Staff Program Evaluation
May 1992

	Strength		Need		NA	
	ESL	ABE	ESL	ABE	ESL	ABE
PHILOSOPHY						
Has a clear mission						
Has a clear educational philosophy						
Comments: ______________________________						
______________________________						
STUDENT OUTREACH AND RECRUITMENT						
Actively recruits within community						
Explains program in language(s) of community						
Reflects diversity of community						
Makes clear what program does/does not provide						
Comments: ______________________________						
______________________________						
INTAKE AND ORIENTATION						
Includes learner as a partner in goal-setting						
Explains what is expected of learners clearly						
Identifies short- and long-term learner goals and outcomes						
Comments: ______________________________						
______________________________						

	Strength		Need		NA	
	ESL	ABE	ESL	ABE	ESL	ABE
INITIAL ASSESSMENT						
Minimizes anxiety						
Conducts assessment in learner's native language						
Identifies learner's strengths						
Identifies skills that need improvement						
Leads to development of individual educational plan						
Provides sound information for placement						
Provides information for support services or referral, as appropriate						
Discusses assessment results with learners immediately						
Provides assessment results to teachers						
Comments:________________________						
_________________________________						
CURRICULUM						
Has curriculum development model appropriate to learner strengths and needs						
Involves teachers in curriculum development						
Is coordinated from level to level						
Includes student input in curriculum development						
Comments:________________________						
_________________________________						

	Strength		Need		Na	
	ESL	ABE	ESL	ABE	ESL	ABE
SUPPORT SERVICES						
Offers enough counseling time for students						
Offers appropriate personal counseling and referrals						
Offers appropriate education counseling and referrals						
Offers appropriate vocational counseling and referrals						
Provides on-site educational and personal counseling in the learner's native language, whenever possible and appropriate						
Clarifies goals and reviews need for support services on an ongoing basis, including counseling, childcare and transportation						
Comments: ____________________						
____________________						
FOLLOW-UP						
Contacts learners after they complete/ exit program to determine reason for withdrawal and/or to track learner progress and achievements						
Supports learners in next steps						
Comments: ____________________						
____________________						

	Strength		Need		NA	
	ESL	ABE	ESL	ABE	ESL	ABE
STAFFING						
Has well-qualified staff						
Has clear job description which accurately reflect work done						
Has appropriate salaries, benefits, and opportunities for growth						
Demonstrates good working relationships among staff						
Has diverse staff which reflects community						
Has appropriate teacher/learner ratios						
Has appropriate counselor/learner ratios						
Provides adequate staff supervision and evaluation						
Has clear personnel policies and processes						
Has an Affirmative Action policy						
Comments: ______________________________ ______________________________						
STAFF DEVELOPMENT						
Ensures opportunities for all staff to attend appropriate training and staff development activities						
Has individual and group staff development plans						
Has staff orientation process						
Comments: ______________________________ ______________________________ ______________________________						

	Strength		Need		NA	
INSTRUCTION	ESL	ABE	ESL	ABE	ESL	ABE
Is based on learner goals, interests, and needs						
Uses diverse materials and methods						
Uses materials and methods which are age appropriate, nongender biased and interesting						
Includes some teacher-made materials						
Includes some learner- generated materials						
Addresses different learning styles						
Assigns appropriate homework						
Offers appropriate intensity and duration of services						
Is available at times and locations accessible to learners						
Lessons follow and build on each other in a way that both teacher and learners understand						

Comments: ______________________________

____

____

____

	Strength		Need		NA	
	ESL	ABE	ESL	ABE	ESL	ABE
ON-GOING ASSESSMENT						
Teaches students effectively so that they progress at an appropriate pace						
Measures and documents learner progress toward their instructional goals						
Views goal setting as a continuous process						
Produces clear indicators for level changes						
Is a joint process between learner and teacher						
Does assessments regularly						
Uses appropriate assessment tools						
Uses assessments to modify and adapt curriculum and instruction						
Includes ongoing diagnostic assessment						

Comments: ____________________________

____

____

	Strength		Need		NA	
	ESL	ABE	ESL	ABE	ESL	ABE
PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT						
Has a program development plan						
Includes student, staff and community member in planning						
Comments:						
PROGRAM MANAGEMENT/GOVERNANCE						
Has regular staff meetings						
Has clear and effective decision-making process in which staff participates						
Solicits input from p-t staff,advisory board, learners, and community						
Has an active/committed advisory board which reflects community						
Has fair distribution of administrative tasks						
Has adequate communication and coordination among staff						
Devotes appropriate amount of staff time to administrative tasks						
Comments:						

	Strength		Need		NA	
	ESL	ABE	ESL	ABE	ESL	ABE
EVALUATION						
Conducts on-going program evaluation and review of program outcomes						
Uses evaluation results to revise/refine program design and assist in future planning						
Involves staff and learners, and solicits input from advisory board and community						
Demonstrates ability to look critically at program philosophy and goals						
Makes evaluation available to staff, learners and advisory counsel						

Comments: ______________________________

____

____

	Strength		Need		NA	
	ESL	ABE	ESL	ASBE	ESL	ABE
TRACKING/REPORTING						
Tracks/documents learner progress						
Tracks community demographics, applications, enrollments, attendance, outcomes,and waiting lists						
Uses information for program revision						
Comments: ____________________________						
____________________________						
FISCAL & PROGRAM MANAGEMENT						
Tracks budgets by funding source						
Maintains adequate and accurate fiscal & statistical record systems						
Monitors expenditures against budget						
Prepares and submits accurate and timely reports						
Comments: ____________________________						
____________________________						
INTERAGENCY COORDINATION						
Has formal and informal interagency referral agreements						
Links staff and learners with other programs						
Participates in community activities						
Comments: ____________________________						

	Strength		Need		NA	
	ESL	ABE	ESL	ABE	ESL	ABE
FACILITIES						
Provides good learning/teaching enrivonment						
Has adequate furnishings and classroom, office, meeting, counseling, and resource space						
Has adequate teaching supplies						
Has a working photocopier						
Is clean, well-lit and ventilated, with comfortable temperatures year-round						
Is handicap-accessible						

Comments: ______________________________

____

____

COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTER

PROGRAM EVALUATION BY STUDENTS
1992

CLASS ______________________________

TIME ______________________________

TEACHER ______________________________

Please answer all the questions carefully.

1. How long have you been coming to the Learning Center?

________ years ________ months

2. We want to know how the school has helped you. Check all the things you learned in this school. Do not check the things you learned in another place.

A. Reading

Did the school help you to understand what you read?
_____ yes _____ no

Did the school help you to read and understand a newspaper?
_____ yes _____no

Did the school help you to enjoy reading?
_____ yes _____ no

B. Conversation

Did the school help you to communicate in English?
_____ yes _____ no

Did the school help you to understand what you hear on the radio or TV?
_____ yes _____ no

C. Math

Do you have a math class here?
_____ yes _____ no

Did the school help you learn to manage your money?
_____ yes _____ no

Did the school help you learn to fill out your income tax forms?
_____ yes _____ no

Did the school help you learn to estimate store bills?
_____ yes _____ no

Did the school help you to enjoy doing math?
_____ yes _____ no

Did the school help you learn to use a calculator?
_____ yes _____ no

D. Jobs

Do you have a job?
_____ yes _____ no

Did your classes help you to get a job?
_____ yes _____ no

Did your classes help you to get a better job or promotion?
_____ yes _____ no

E. Family

Do you have children?
_____ yes _____ no

Did your classes help you to help your children with homework?
_____ yes _____ no

Did your classes help you to read to your children?
_____ yes _____ no

F. Community

Did the school help you to help other people in your family or community?
_____ yes _____ no

Did the school help you to make friends in school or outside?
_____ yes _____ no

Did your classes help you to get a driver's license?
_____ yes _____ no

Did the school help you to get a library card?
_____ yes _____ no

G. Other

Did the school help you to feel more confident in yourself?
_____ yes _____ no

Did you learn to use a computer here?
_____ yes _____ no

Did you learn to type here?
_____ yes _____ no

H. Please give other examples of what you learned in school and how the school has helped you.

3. What do you like best about the school?

4. What is not good about the school? How can we make the school better?

5. Do you have anything else to tell us?

OBJECTIVE #___:

KEY ACTIVITIES	TIMELINE	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE

QCC INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW

NAME ____

BACKGROUND CONVERSATION

WHERE ARE YOU FROM? ______________________

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN IN THIS COUNTRY? ______________

DID YOU COME DIRECTLY TO THE WORCESTER AREA? __________

DO YOU HAVE FAMILY HERE? __________

CHILDREN _____ AGES _______

EMPLOYMENT

DID YOU WORK IN YOUR COUNTRY? __ ___ WHAT KIND OF WORK? _______________

WHAT KIND OF WORK DO YOU DO AT ______________________________

CAN YOU DESCRIBE SPECIFICALLY, YOUR JOB? _____________________________

____

EDUCATION

Did you go to school in your country? ______ How many years? __________

What was school like in your country? Did you enjoy it? __________

Have you ever gone to school in the United States? ________________

Are you teaching your children your own native language? __________

Have you ever taught anything else, like sewing, cooking, driving, sports? ________________________________

What made you decide that you'd like to come to classes now?

____

Do you know specifically what you'd like to learn? ________________

____

How do you think learning to read or write better will help you in life? ____

____

What does your family think of this? ______________________

What do you do when you have trouble reading or writing something? (Does someone help the person?)

at home _________________________________

at work _________________________________

LANGUAGE

Do you read or write in your own language? __________

Is this easy or difficult for you? ___________

What do you read in English. . . . the phone book __________

medicine bottles __________ grocery ads _________ menus _________

newspaper __________ magazines __________

What do you have to read at work?__________________________

What do you already know how to write?

checks________ note to school______________

application forms_________ things at work_____________

Please fill out this information

NAME____

ADDRESS____
(street) (city) (state) (zip)

PHONE NUMBER __________________________

DEPARTMENT_____________________________________ SHIFT______________________

Choose one writing topic. Write three or four sentences

(1) A note telling your child's teacher that he or she is sick and cannot come to school.

(2) Phone message for your wife/husband/friend.

(3) A post card to a friend while you are on a trip.

(4) A letter to your landlord complaining about something.

(5) A typical work memo.

____

____

____

____

____

____

READING

CHOOSE A READING PASSAGE

READING SAMPLE TITLE____________________

WHAT WAS THIS PASSAGE ABOUT? ____________________

____

____

____

WAS THIS EASY OR DIFFICULT FOR YOU TO READ? ____________

IF A SECOND SELECTION IS MADE, ASK SAME QUESTIONS

IS THERE ANYTHING YOU DID WHILE YOU WERE READING TO HELP YOU IN TRYING TO UNDERSTAND THIS PASSAGE?

____

____

____

IF THERE WERE 3 LEVELS OF CLASSES, WHERE WOULD YOU BE MOST COMFORTABLE? ____________________

ARE THERE ANY SCHEDULING PROBLEMS WE CAN ASSIST YOU WITH?

____

School History

a. What are your strengths and weaknesses in reading? Writing? Arithmetic?

____

____

____

____

____

b. How did you do in elementary school? Grades 7-8? High school?__________

____

____

____

____

c. Were you in any special program such as resource room, Title I, advanced class?______________________________

____

____

____

____

d. What do you want to accomplish in our class?____________________

____

____

____

____

Appendix 6

One Stop ____

Futures ____

School Only ____

JUST A START PROGRAM

EDUCATION PROGRAM INTAKE/REGISTRATION

Name ______________________________ Date ______________

Address ______________________________ Telephone ______________

Date of Birth ______________ Age _____

Student's First Language ______________ Literate in first language? Y N

Educational Background and Objectives

Last School Attended ______________________________

City, State ______________________________ Last Grade Attended _____

Last Grade Completed _____ High School Grad? Yes( ) No( )

Date of Last Attendance ______________________

1.	Self-rating on reading skills:	Excellent	Good	Fair	Needs Work
2.	Self-rating on arithmetic:	Excellent	Good	Fair	Needs work
3.	Self-rating on writing skills:	Excellent	Good	Fair	Needs work

Assessment

SRA Reading Comprehension ________ (G/1) __________)G/2)

TABE

Locator test Vocabulary __________ Math _________ Total __________

Complete battery level(s) ____

Form 5

1. Vocabulary ______________
2. Comprehension ____________

   Total Reading ____________
3. Math Comp. ______________
4. Math C&A ________________

   Total Math ______________
5. Lang. Mech. _____________
6. Lang. Expr. _____________

   Total Lang. _____________

   Total Battery ___________
7. Spelling ________________

Form 6

1. Vocabulary ______________
2. Comprehension ____________

   Total Reading ____________
3. Math Comp. ______________
4. Math C&A ________________

   Total Math ______________
5. Lang. Mech. _____________
6. Lang. Expr. _____________

   Total Lang. _____________

   Total Battery ___________
7. Spelling ________________

Writing Sample

Pre ________________________ Post ________________________

GED Testing

Writing ____________________

Social Studies ______________

Science ____________________

Literature __________________

Mathematics ________________

STUDENT LEARNING GOALS

____
Name

____
Date

Confidential

Personal Improvement

I would like to get better at:

	I would like to do this
note taking	Yes
studying	Yes
taking tests	Yes
listening	Yes
following directions	Yes
asking for help	Yes
organizing my work	Yes
planning my time	Yes
working with others	Yes
solving problems	Yes
finishing what I start	Yes
speaking	Yes
becoming more responsible	Yes
setting goals and achieving them	Yes
handwriting	Yes
vocabulary	Yes

I would like to:

register to vote	Yes
get a library card	Yes
learn to use the library	Yes
prepare for learner's permit test	Yes
join a community organization like the "Y"	Yes
get my G.E.D.	Yes
get a high school diploma	Yes
go to college	Yes
go to a training program	Yes
start a career	Yes

Please list other "Personal Improvement" areas you would like to work on

Subjects and Topics

	I know very little about this		I know something about this		I want to learn about this	
my own culture/heritage						
other cultures						
U.S. history						
world history						
geography						
U.S. politics/civics						
local politics (Mass./Cambridge/S'ville/Boston)						
different religions (Christian, Moslem, Buddhist, etc.)						
psychology						
economics (how money works)						
the welfare system						
civil rights movement						
black history						
women's history						
Vietnam war						
immigration						
maps/globes/where places are located						
lives of famous people						
history of Camb/S'ville/Boston						
my family's history						
how to speak another language						
music						
movies/TV						
biology						
chemistry						
physics						
earth science						
astronomy (stars & planets)						
environment/ecology						

	I know very little about this	I know something about this	I want to learn about this
weather			
the human body			
staying healthy			
nutrition (eating healthy)			
nature			
animals/animal behavior			
engineering (how machines work)			

Please list other subjects and topics you would like to learn about.

____

____

____

EVERYDAY READING SKILLS

To read ...	I Know How To Do This		I Do This All The Time		I Would Like To Learn This
and write my name	___Yes	___No	___Yes	No	Yes
and write my address	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
and write my phone number	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
and write my social security #	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
and write checks	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
and write letters	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
and fill out forms	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
and use a dictionary	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
labels & instructions on					
food	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
medicine	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
clothes	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
applicances	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
a calendar	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
a bus schedule	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
t.v. guide	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
a phone book	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
menus/recipes	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
bills	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
maps	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
newspapers	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
magazines	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
apartment lease	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
Want Advertiser	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
Consumer Reports	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
street signs	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
health information	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
a map	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
notices from welfare office, community	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
to my children	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
notes from my child's school	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
FOR ENJOYMENT:					
adventures	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
mysteries	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
romance	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
history	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes

	I Know How To Do This		I Do This All The Time		I Would Like To Learn This
sports	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
music	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
religion	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
horror	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
tv & movies	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
famous people	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
true life stories	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
self-help books	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
"how-to" books	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
hobbies	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
parenting	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes

Please list other "Everyday Reading Skills" you would be interested in learning.

EVERYDAY MATH SKILLS	I Know How To Do This		I Do This All The Time		I Would Like To Learn This
writing dates as numbers	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
telling time	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
writing the time	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
understanding a batting average	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
add/substract money	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
count change	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
estimate cost of groceries	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
find savings with sales & coupons	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
find lowest priced groceries	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
compare cost of medicines	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
read thermometer	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
use cooking measures	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
find total calories	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
read nutrition information	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
learn to measure	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
learn metric system of measurement	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
finding car mileage	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
total a restaurant check	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
figure sales tax	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
figure tipping	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
read sales tax chart	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
make a budget	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
set savings goal	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
find annual car expenses	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
reading a bill	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
igure cost of installment plans	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
figure credit card charges	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
alculate interest on money	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
stimate cost of home repair and improvement	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
ind dimensions for scale drawing	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
figure amount of materials	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
sing a checking account	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
using a calculator	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes

lease list other "Everyday Math Skills" you would be interested in learning.

SCHOOL MATH	I Know How To Do This		I Do This All The Time		I Would Like To Learn This
addition	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___NO	___Yes
subtraction	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
multiplication	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
division	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
weights/measures	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
measurement	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
decimals	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
fractions	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
ratio/proportions	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
percent	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
word problems	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
algebra	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
geometry	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes

Please list other "School Math" skills you would be interested in learning.

____

____

____

WRITING SKILLS					
using capital letters	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
punctuation	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
spelling	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
parts of speech	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
grammar	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
writing telephone messages	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
writing notes to children's school	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
writing checks	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
filling out forms	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
things to do list	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
a shopping list	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
poems/songs	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
letters to friends & relatives	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
letter of complaint or for assistance	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
to/for newspaper	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes
stories	___Yes	___No	___Yes	___No	___Yes

you would be interested in learning.

WORK SKILLS	I know very little about this	I know something about this	I want to learn about this
fill out an application			
read want ads			
read notice from welfare department, community agencies			
read job evaluations			
fill out forms			
write telephone messages			
file income tax returns			

Please list other "Work Skills" you would like to learn.

___One Stop
___Futures
___Evening Class

JUST A START

EDUCATIONAL GOALS PLAN AND PROGRESS RECORD

Student ______________________________

Date enrolled ______________________ Class ______________

Initial Planning Session: Date __________ Teacher ______________

Long range educational goals:

Long range employment goals:

Student: ______________________

Teacher: ______________________

Date ____________________

EDUCATIONAL GOALS

Name ____ Period ____________________

1. Reading ____

2. Math ____

3. Writing ____

4. Science/Social Studies ____

5. Other Subjects and Topics ____

6. Personal Improvement ____

7. Work Skills ____

Planning Session: Date________________ Teacher________________________

Accomplishment of goals from previous period

Vocational goals

Student: ________________________

Teacher: ________________________

Counsellor: ________________________

Final Planning and Assessment Date________ Teacher_______________

Accomplishment of goals from previous period

Progress made during period of enrollment

Next steps

Student: ____________________________

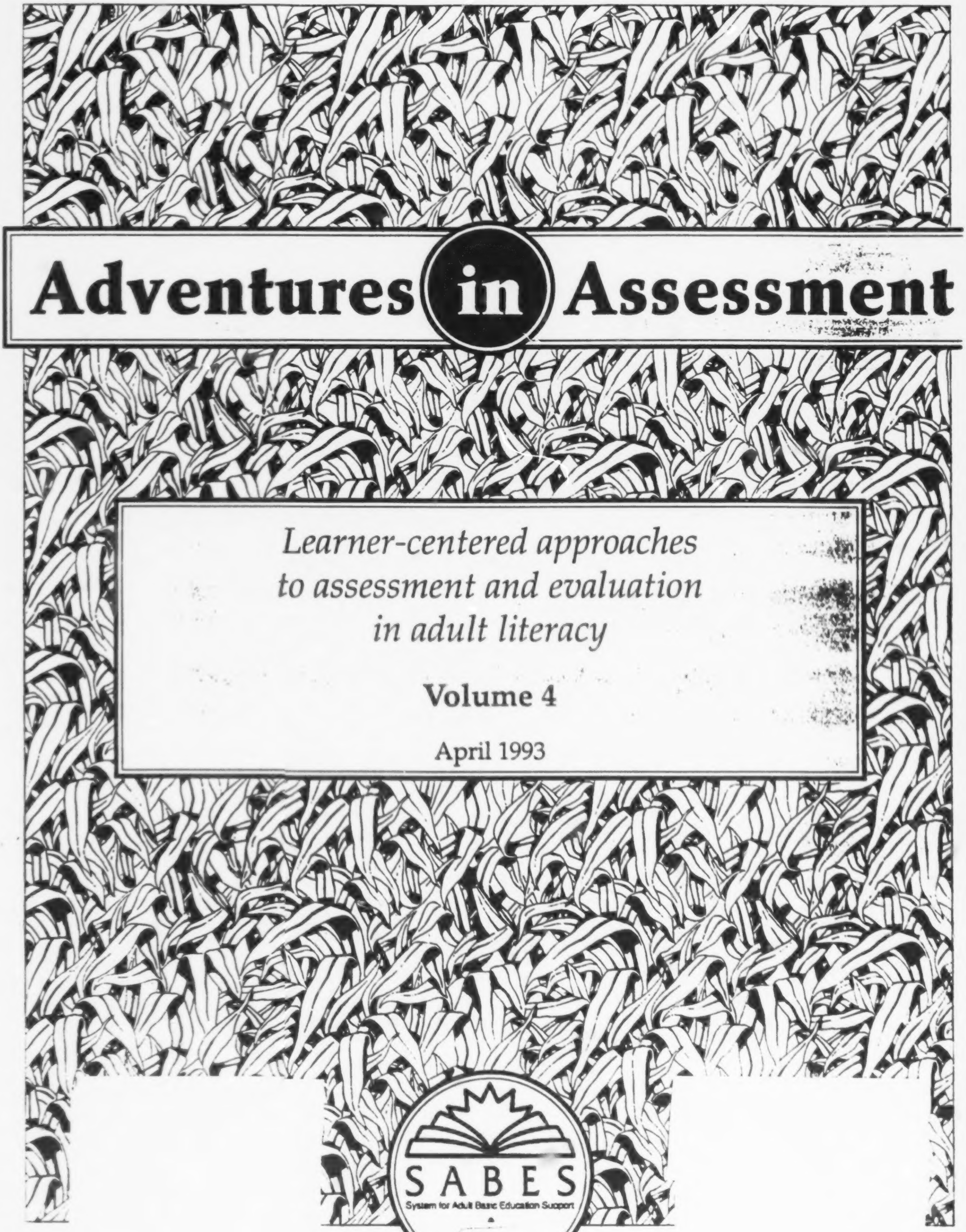
Teacher: ____________________________

Counsellor: __________________________

DAILY LOG

Name______________________________________ Class___________________________________

Week of:	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Accomplishments					
Group Work (if any)					
Student comments					
Goals for next time					
Teachers coments					



Adventures in Assessment

Learner-centered approaches
to assessment and evaluation
in adult literacy

Volume 4

April 1993

SABES
System for Adult Basic Education Support

271

SABES

System for Adult Basic Education Support

SABES is the System for Adult Basic Education Support, a comprehensive training and technical assistance initiative for adult literacy educators and programs. Its goal is to strengthen and enhance literacy services and thus to enable adult learners to attain literacy skills.

SABES accomplishes this goal through staff and program development workshops, consultation, mini-courses, mentoring and peer coaching, and other training activities provided by five Regional Support Centers located at community colleges throughout Massachusetts. SABES also offers a 15-hour Orientation that introduces new staff to adult education theory and practice and enables them to build support networks.

SABES also maintains an adult literacy Clearinghouse to collect, evaluate, and disseminate ABE materials, curricula, methodologies, and program models, and encourages the development and use of practitioner and learner-generated materials. Each of the five SABES Regional Support Centers similarly offers program support and a lending library. SABES maintains an Adult Literacy Hotline, a statewide referral service whch responds to calls from new learners and volunteers. The Hotline number is 1-800-447-8844.

☑

The SABES Central Resource Center, a program of World Education, publishes a statewide quarterly newsletter, "Bright Ideas," and journals on topics of interest to adult literacy professionals, such as this volume of "Adventures in Assessment."

The first three volumes of "Adventures in Assessment" present a comprehensive view of the state of practice in Massachusetts through articles written by adult literacy practitioners. Volume 1, **Getting Started**, *includes start-up and intake activities; Volume 2,* **Ongoing**, *shares tools for ongoing assessment as part of the learning process; Volume 3,* **Looking Back, Starting Again**, *focuses on tools and procedures used at the end of a cycle or term, including self, class, and group evaluation by both teachers and learners. Volume 4 and future issues will either be dedicated to specific topics or a range of interests.*

"Adventures in Assessment" is free to Massachusetts programs; out-of-state requests will be charged a nominal fee, at cost. Please write to, or call:

Elizabeth Santiago
SABES Central Resource Center
World Education
210 Lincoln Street
Boston, MA 02111
617-482-9485

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Adventures in Assessment

Volume 4

April 1993

EDITOR: Loren McGrail
ASSISTANT EDITOR: Rick Schwartz

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SABES
System for Adult Basic Education Support

Introduction

Looking Back

by
Loren McGrail
editor

How to begin? Where to begin? I read back through my other carefully composed introductions for help. Maybe I said something I can use to get me going. No luck. There is no neat, overriding category that I can use to frame the articles I received for this volume of ***Adventures in Assessment***. The categories or components: **Getting Started, Ongoing,** and **Looking Back** still provide a useful framework, but I'm growing bored talking about tools, checklists, questionnaires, and surveys.

I want to talk with you on another level, the level of *why*. I want to talk not from the perspective of what researchers are saying about what learner-centered approaches to assessment are, but what you and I *know*. The authors in these pages are telling us about the teaching/ learning process and how assessment either helps or hinders this understanding. If we believe in the validity of teachers as researchers of their own practice, it is time for us to really listen to the voices of these narratives and not just focus on the tools they have developed, adapted, or modified.

As I was reading through the articles for this volume again, for pleasure now, and not for editing purposes, a few voices sang out to me loud and clear. They said, "underline this, this is important, you could build an introduction around this." So, colleagues, I would like to change the format and the nature of what an introduction is supposed to do, and tell you instead some of the things I learned from listening to what the practitioners and learners in this volume have to say.

The voices from the learners Nancy Venator interviewed in **Through the Eyes of an ABE Interviewer** stand out immediately. "When I could not read and went into stores, there was an animal inside of me (he touched his stomach). As I learned more and more the animal slowly went away (he moved his hand slowly up to his chest) and now it is gone forever (he moved his hand upward and out with a flourish) *[page 44]*." Hearing the way learners actually talk about their own learning process is a baseline for me by which to measure all that we say and do. The "animal inside" reminds me of how little I really know about just what it feels like not to be literate.

I do know, however, what Dulany Alexander is talking about in her article, **The ESL Classroom as Community: How Self-Assessment Can Work**, when she writes, "The kind of evaluation, defined as progress from one level to the next, has meant that if learners don't keep progressing, we don't get paid *[page 34]*." Her voice has a kind of resignation that reminds me of Sally Spencer's words when she remarks, "Passing the GED test, which still tests for 'single correct responses', is the primary goal of the GED student *[page 42]*." I can imagine Eileen Barry joining this duet and adding her own complaint about the TABE: "After the students completed the assessment, it was our turn to struggle with it. We felt frustrated as we looked at the answers, both correct and incorrect, because we had no way of knowing why the student chose a particular answer *[page 22]*."

Missing from this chorus, however, is the Even Start project in Amesbury, which is mandated to use the CASAS for their formalized assessment process. They seem to have managed to include their CASAS assessment in their more holistic intake process. I still wonder how the CASAS results are integrated into the adult learner's individualized learning plan. Or why they needed to develop another goalsetting tool beyond the CASAS. Is it because their goal sheet offers elements of "affective measurement," a chance for parents/adult learners to express their dreams and wishes, combined with "felt" or "real" strengths and weaknesses which can later provide learners with an opportunity to "ethically analyze how they perceive themselves, and whether their perceptions have helped or hindered their progress *[page 18]*."

An aversion to standardized measurements is not all these practitioners have in common however. In addition to sharing a view of literacy as practice, how learners use literacy in their daily lives, inside and outside the classroom, they share the view that how learners judge their own capabilities and their own progress is also critical. Many of the tools they have developed, whether they are tape journals *(page 38)*, informal reading inventories *(page 22)*, goal-setting activities *(pages 8 and 15)*, or self-evaluation forms *(page 34)*, ask the learners to redraw their image of themselves as learners from a position of strength, not as isolated individuals, but as learners "joining a community of learners who share similar experiences, frustrations, and accomplishments *[page 22]*."

If we believe in the validity of teachers as researchers of their own practice, it is time for us to really listen to the voices of these narratives and not just focus on the tools.

These are my reactions, dear reader, some intellectual, some gut. I invite you to practice what we preach about reading not being a passive activity, to interact with these articles, to ask questions, make predictions, look for answers and — if you feel like sharing your responses — write to us at ***Adventures in Assessment*** so we can share your ideas with a growing circle of practitioners committed to participatory approaches to assessment. ☑

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Getting Started

Group Goal Setting Activities: An Approach from Youth Service Corps

This article is excerpted from Chapter 3 of the PECE Resource and Planning Guide. *PECE, Practical Education for Citizenship and Employment, is the name of the education component developed for the Urban Corps Expansion Project (UCEP), a three-year demonstration project designed by Public/Private Ventures, Inc. of Philadelphia.*

UCEP is a combination community service/ education model now operating at 11 sites nationwide. Each autonomous program serves 50-100 youths, aged 17-23, who are unemployed and out of school. Approximately seventy-five percent do not have diplomas or GEDs.

Corpsmembers (as program participants are referred to) are given paid employment in human services and community service projects, such as rehabbing buildings for non-profit developers, in addition to the program's educational component.

The manual from which this chapter is taken has been written to be useful outside the urban youth service corps, such as in summer jobs programs. It is written for trainers and educators.

Chapter 3 focuses on setting goals and creating learning plans. In this volume of Adventures in Assessment, *we focus on group goal-setting. In the next volume, we will continue the part of the chapter which discusses individual goal setting.*

excerpted from the
PECE Resource and Planning Guide

for more information:
Michael Sack
Clare Ignatowski
Public/Private Ventures, Inc.
399 Market Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106
215-592-9099

The process of setting goals and planning steps to achieve them is ongoing throughout each corpsmember's experience in the program. The way you begin this process with new corpsmembers has a special importance. Many of the young adults who enter the corps are burdened with a history of failure in school and a sense of education as something that has been imposed on them.

But most also enter with the motivation to change their lives. Your early goal-setting activities are an opportunity to build on this motivation and help corpsmembers begin to redraw their image of themselves as learners and to rethink what learning is all about. Through these activities, corpsmembers should discover that they are responsible for defining where they want to go and what they have to do to get there — and that you are going to support them.

SETTING GOALS

Goal setting is really an exercise in problem solving. Corpsmembers have to learn to ask — and try to answer — a series of questions that enable them to define their choices and decide how to get where they want to go. Most simply the questions are: What are my goals? What must I do to reach my goals? To answer these, corpsmembers must work through a series of more precise questions:

- Where do I want to be in five years (or four weeks, or six months, or ten years)?
- What must I know to get there?
- What steps must I take in order to know and be able to do these things?
- What abilities and experience do I already have that are going to help me take these steps?
- What obstacles might be in my way?
- How can I deal with those obstacles?
- What should I do first, second and so on?

These are tough questions for anyone to answer: adults, young adults, college students, at-risk youth. But they are also essential questions to the goal-setting process, which involves defining needs, evaluating one's own strengths and weaknesses, and planning and carrying out strategies.

Group Activities

Goal setting activities that take place in groups during orientation or in the beginning of a program should help corpsmembers identify broad, long-term needs and begin to see them in relation to what they can accomplish in the corps. In almost every case, corpsmembers will end up with a product — a questionnaire, a story, a timeline, a goal chart — that should be placed in their portfolio, where it can be used as a starting point for developing personal learning plans during your one-on-one meetings.

The group activities lay the foundation for the next step in the process, when corpsmembers more precisely define their goals in the corps: in life skills (employment, community participation, personal development), work, and personal academics.

The group activities lay the foundation for the next step in the process, when corpsmembers more precisely define their goals in the corps: in life skills (employment, community participation, personal development), work, and personal academics.

The group activities are:

Option #1: Thinking about Learning. Corpsmembers explore their past experiences with education and start to define their learning needs.

Option #2: Guest Speaker. A speaker from outside the corps discusses his or her experiences overcoming obstacles and achieving goals.

Option #3: Goals Questionnaire. Corpsmembers identify reasons they joined the corps and, in the process, think about potential goals they might not have previously considered.

Option #4: Creating a Future. Corpsmembers make a collage or write a story that describes a potential future for themselves.

Option #5: A Timeline. Corpsmembers create a timeline in order to be more specific about their goals and begin to see the relationship between short- and long-term goals.

Option #6: Goal-Setting Chart. In this follow-up activity to the timeline, corpsmembers look at the relationship between what they can accomplish in the corps and their longer-term goals.

Option #7: Returning to the Corps 10 Years Later. In another way of looking at their long-term goals, corpsmembers imagine themselves 10 years in the future, returning to the Corps either for a reunion or as a guest speaker.

[Editor's note: this excerpt includes Activities 1, 2, 5 & 7.]

☑

Group Goal Setting Activities
Option #1:
Thinking About Learning

This activity allows corpsmembers to explore their past experiences with education: what they remember as positive and negative learning experiences and how they learn best. Corpsmembers also explore their own learning needs: what makes learning comfortable and what makes learning uncomfortable (and, therefore, difficult).

Materials: Photographs and illustrations, readings, newsprint.

1. Start by having corpsmembers look at a variety of pictures of people learning something in school and in other settings (especially work). Include people who are happy, miserable, young and old. Have corpsmembers describe the pictures, then talk about the memories they evoke.
2. Read aloud a few excerpts from descriptions that people have written about their experiences learning and in school. After each excerpt, let corpsmembers discuss what they have heard: How does it connect with their own experiences? Encourage corpsmember to tell their own stories.
3. Divide the corpsmembers into two groups, and ask one group to make a list of phrases that could complete the fragment "It's easy to learn when....." Ask the other group to complete "It's hard to learn when...." When both groups are done, have volunteers copy the groups responses onto newsprint. Here are some possible responses:

   It's easy to learn when:

   The teacher is good.

   We pay attention.

   People aren't making fun of each other.

   We know why we are learning something.

   We understand what's going on.

   It's hard to learn when:

   The teacher talks too much.

   People laugh at you.

   We don't understand.

   We have other things on our mind.

   The teacher thinks we're stupid.

4. Follow up these lists by having the whole group discuss some items more specifically. With the items here, for example, you can ask what makes a good teacher, what makes it hard to understand something, or what they can do to have a group where people aren't making fun of each other. If the corpsmembers have begun keeping journals, suggest possible journal topics. For example:
    - An experience (in school or on the job) where they felt good about learning something: What did they learn? Why did it make them feel so good?
    - A description of someone from whom they learned (a teacher, an employer, a co-worker, anyone).
    - A description of a time when someone learned something from them.
    - An experience at school or work that made it hard for them to learn.

    You might want to allow time for corpsmembers to write during the activity. Then those who want to can read their pieces aloud.

[Adapted from Andy Nash in Elsa Auerbach, Making Meaning, Making Change: A Guide to Participatory Curriculum Development for Adult ESL and Family Literacy. *University of Massachusetts English Family Literacy Project, Boston, 1990]*

Group Goal-Setting Activities
Option #2:
Guest Speaker

This activity helps corpsmembers think about the process of setting and achieving goals by listening to someone else speak about his or her experience. The speaker should be someone the corpsmembers can see as a role model.

1. Invite a guest speaker from the community who has "made it": who has set and achieved goals for herself or himself. Prepare the guest speaker by giving him/her some background about the corps's goals, and some idea where the corpsmembers are in their own goal setting process. Ask the speaker to talk about his or her own goal setting process and strategies: the goals that he or she has set (and why), the steps needed to achieve those goals, the difficulties encountered and how he or she overcame the difficulties. The speaker may be able to include comments on values, self esteem, sex-role stereotypes, and decision making as well as goal setting.
2. Let corpsmembers know in advance that there will be a speaker and what he/she will be talking about. Corpsmembers should have a sense of what to listen for and how the topic relates to their own lives. They should also think about questions they might want to ask.
3. After the presentation, allow time for discussion and questions from corpsmembers.

Group Goal-Setting Activities
Option #5:
A Timeline

This activity encourages corpsmembers to become more specific about their goals and begin to see the relationship between short-term and long-term goals.

Materials: Newsprint (for you to draw your timeline on as you model the steps in this activity), paper, pens or pencils.

1. Have corpsmembers draw the first part of their timelines: from birth to present. They should write in dates and major events that have happened in their lives (you will want to model this and the next two steps on newsprint).
2. Now have the corpsmember extend their timelines two years into the future and write in events they want to make happen in those years (this will include in and beyond the corps, such as earning their GED, graduating from the corps, joining the Army, getting married, starting college, getting job training, buying a car, etc.).
3. Finally, have them extend their timelines to reach about ten more years into the future. Ask them to add the events they would like to experience during this period (they might include such goals as living in a place of their own, getting promoted, earning a college degree, taking a trip, getting married, etc.).
4. Corpsmembers may want to display their timelines in the room or hold them up to share with the group. Stimulate discussion by asking questions like the following:

   How much control do people have over what happens in the early years of their lives — up to age 10 for example? What about during the second ten years: do we get to set goals for ourselves and work toward them in our teen years? What about when we're in our 20s or 30s?

   What connections do you see between your goals in the next two years and your goals for the ten years after that?

Group Goal-Setting Activities
Option #7:
Returning to the Corps Ten Years Later

This activity provides another way for corpsmembers to think about their long-term goals: by imagining themselves ten years in the future, returning to the corps either for a reunion or as a guest speaker. In the first scenario, corpsmembers fill out a questionnaire; in the second scenario, they prepare a short speech, which they can present to the rest of the group. Allow corpsmembers to select the choice they feel more comfortable with.

A. *Corps Reunion:* It's been ten years since you were in the corps, and now you've been invited back for a reunion. The corps has sent you a questionnaire to fill out about what you're doing now. They are going to make all of the questionnaires into a booklet, which they will give to everyone that comes to the reunion.

1. I am _____ years old. *(Remember, this is ten years into the future.)*
2. My job is:
3. My responsibilities at work include:
4. After I left the corps, I prepared for this job by:
5. My family responsibilities are:
6. My most important personal possessions are:
7. Of my experiences in the last ten years, these have been the best ones:

B. *Returning to the corps as a guest speaker:* You've worked hard and been a big success since you graduated from the corps ten years ago. Now the corps director has invited you back to speak to corpsmembers about how you set and achieved your goals. She/he asks you to talk about what you have done in the ten years since you graduated.

You want to write down notes to prepare your talk and this is how you organize them:

- The goals I set for myself and the work I'm doing now:
- The steps I took to achieve my goals:
- Difficulties I encountered:
- Things I did to overcome those difficulties:
- My goals for the future and how I plan to achieve them:

Write down the notes for your talk. Then, if you wish, give the talk to other people in your group.

The Even Start Model

Empowering the Student through Goal Setting

by
Susan Martin,
Sandra Hall, and
Jeanette Bahre

Amesbury Even Start

The North Shore town of Amesbury, Massachusetts is serving as a site of Even Start, a federally funded model addressing the dual issues of parenting and literacy.

The four-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education, awarded to the Amesbury Public School system to service 48 target families has two primary goals: supporting adult parenting skills and empowering parents as their children's first teacher by developing literacy skills.

Amesbury Even Start is based upon a case-management model. Each family entering the program is assigned a Home-Based Visitor and a Family Literacy Specialist. The interrelated nature of the program is emphasized by including the Family Literacy Specialist, the Home-Based Visitor, and the parent in the development of goals for the family in each component: adult education, early childhood education, and parenting family issues. These goals are then used to plan that family's involvement in Even Start activities.

The program is organized in eight-week service cycles. At the beginning of each cycle, families set short-term and long-term goals for themselves and their children. Then staff collaborate with parents in the selection of activities to attain individual goals. At the end of the eight-week cycle, the staff meet again with the parent to evaluate progress and possibly to reassess and set new goals.

THE ADULT LITERACY COMPONENT

The adult literacy component of Even Start is a multi-level program aimed at increasing basic skills, improving self-concepts, reinforcing various uses of literacy, maximizing parent involvement in child-centered learning, and creating awareness of career/employment opportunities.

At the most basic level, the program provides an on-site adult literacy program focusing on attaining functional and GED skills. At another level, parents are learning about child development in order to actively participate in their children's learning.

We have recently incorporated the use of small groups into our literacy program. These small groups are planned by staff based on the general goals of the adult learners. The parents can "opt" into any one of these groups at the beginning of a cycle if relevant. The groups have helped build a sense of community within the program and many friendly relationships have formed.

For the adult learner who is considered a lower-level ABE student, one-on-one tutoring is provided. When the parent feels he/she is ready, he/she can opt into a smaller group which consists of students with similar literacy levels and social/group interaction skills. We have found that social contact and acceptance of one's literacy level is one of the first steps many lower level

EVEN START'S PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH

The philosophical approach to education at Even Start rests under a Whole Language umbrella. We define Whole Language as a belief that language is central to learning, that learning is easiest when it is from whole to part (when it is in authentic contexts), and when it is functional to the learner. Whole Language also empowers the learner, by operating on a belief that learning is both personal and social and that educational settings must be learning communities. This philosophy includes an acceptance of all learners and the languages, cultures, and experiences they bring to their education.

The Whole Language approach for adults is developmental and is driven by the experiences of the adult learner, which means that instruction must build on and connect to an individual's life and language experiences. Oral and written language experiences must be purposeful, functional and real. The four language modes — listening, speaking, reading, writing — are mutually supportive and must not be artificially separated; rather they should be equally emphasized.

The Whole Language approach also invites adults to recognize and build upon strengths. Even Start does not focus on deficiencies. A broader scope of assessment and instruction is incorporated which includes assessing the student's prior knowledge, providing organizational strengths and options, evaluating new learning, and identifying and teaching concepts, relationships and connections.

Students are empowered when they become active agents in their own learning, when they acquire a sense of belonging paired with autonomy, objectivity, and knowing what they say matters. Even Start's curriculum incorporates strategies to encourage self growth and discovery of individual learning styles and preferences.

students must take to feel comfortable with themselves and be motivated to attend. Additional adult literacy experiences are personalized and based on the goals parents set for themselves.

Initial Assessment and Measurement of Adult Learner Progress

Even Start is an empowerment model, therefore assessment and measurement of adult learners is not based on their weaknesses; rather, it is based upon their strengths and the wealth of knowledge they bring to our program. Accordingly, our assessment tools are non-traditional and seek to empower and strengthen our parents/adult learners from the moment they come into the program by revealing their ability to take charge and be proud of the lives they are leading.

The emphasis at Even Start is on Family Literacy and the importance of transferring learning from parent to child and visa versa. Therefore, the staff responsible for the initial assessment come from both components of our program. Parent/adult learners who enter the program set goals with, and are initially assessed by, both a Family Literacy Specialist and a Home Based Visitor.

During the intake procedure, the staff informally assess the functional/academic capabilities of the parent/adult learner based on the Amesbury Even Start Goal Sheet *(see sample, next page)* and on a variety of intake sessions. The Goal Sheet uncovers a variety of assessment information, but at the same time acts as an extremely inviting,

AMESBURY EVEN START GOAL SHEET

Goals: 8 Week Cycle from ________ **to** ________

Parent Name ______________________ **Date** ______________

Family Literacy Staff _________________ **Home-Based Visitor** ____________________

There must be a goal and activities in each of the following areas: **Adult Alone Time** (Adult Literacy Work), **Child Alone Time** (Child Development), **Parenting Support** and **Parent and Child Together Time** (Enhancement of the Parent/Child Relationship).

	Long-Term Goal	Short-Term Goal	8-Week Activity Plan
Adult Literacy Work	Get ready for a job	Learn about computers Improve writing skills	Newsletter group: 2-3 p.m., Tues. Introduction to Mac: 1-2 p.m., Mon. Writing group: 10-12 p.m., Wed.
Child Development Related	Understand my child	Learn about 3-year-olds	Find and read 2-3 articles about 3 year olds using the resources of Even Start
Parenting Related	Provide a healthy place for my child to grow	Learn how to have more patience with my child	Attend 2-5 year-old Parent Group 1-2 p.m., Tues.
Parent-Child Together	Do more activities with my child	Participate in activities that Home-Based Visitor brings every week	Home-based visits will happen on Thursdays from 1-2 p.m.

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EVEN START IN THE HOME

The Home-Based Visitor for each family ensures the family receives appropriate services. After the full team identifies goals, the Home-Based Visitor reviews the parenting and child development goals, and assists the adults in designing a program to fit the family's needs. Information and referrals to appropriate community services may be offered by the Home-Based Visitors, who can act as advocates for adults dealing with other agencies. Group meetings with providers from these other agencies are common, and are critical to ensure no duplication of service occurs.

Visits to the home, usually weekly, incorporate activities related to various goals. During these visits, the Home-Based Visitor brings a book and often a game or resource from one of the many kits developed by Even Start staff. The Home-Based Visitor introduces the material to the parent(s) and child, demonstrates use of the material while directly interacting with the child, models adult behaviors necessary to facilitate the child's exploration and experimentation, and encourages appropriate parent-child interplay. Visits typically last one hour and include a brief evaluation of the activity and a discussion of how the activity can be replayed throughout the coming week.

On weeks when families participate together, such as in playgroups and workshops, there are no home visits.

unintimidating way to assess initial capabilities, attributes and interests. The Goal Sheet is a visual representation of an eight-week cycle. It is broken up into categories representing program requirements at Even Start, including: adult education, parenting skills, child development and parent/child together time. These categories are then subdivided into short-term and long-term goals columns.

Although simple in description, this Goal Sheet provides the case managers with a wealth of initial assessment information without the use of extensive formalized testing or frequently inaccurate initial self-evaluations. Informal skills assessed include communication skills, such as listening to the description of the Even Start program options, and formulating questions about the adult learner's individualized Family Literacy Plan. Both verbal and written expression of goals are used in the initial assessment.

The Goal Sheet also provides information on the critical thinking abilities of the parent/adult learner. For example, questions posed may include: What is the difference between short and long term goals? Are the goals realistic?

The Goal Sheet also provides information on decision-making skills such as the following: what program options will be emphasized during the initial eight week cycle? how do eight-week program options lead to long term goals.

The Goal Sheet offers some elements of affective measurement. Parents/Adult learners often express dreams and wishes, combined with "felt" or "real" strengths and weaknesses. This information is extremely important when it comes to cycle evaluations, because it provides the parent/adult learner an opportunity to ethically analyze how they perceive themselves, and whether their perceptions have helped or hindered their progress.

Parenting and child development goals are also assessed during the initial intake procedure. Information is collected formally through the use of the Parent/Child interaction forms which attempt to uncover issues which may require future support *(see sample at the end of this section).*

Intake Utilizes Many Formats

The intake process allows a variety of information to be gathered in a number of ways: discussion sessions, informal goal-setting sessions, formalized questionnaires, and a formalized adult assessment tool — the California Adult Student Assessment System, CASAS. All Even Start Programs nationwide utilize CASAS, a measure of functional reading ability.

[Editor's Note: CASAS is "a comprehensive educational assessment system designed to measure competency-based curriculum for all levels of Adult Basic Education and English as a Second Language, including a pre-vocational curriculum," according to the CASAS Overview. According to its developers, it measures functional basic skills in reading, math, and listening comprehension, and utilizes authentic assessment or applied performance measures on oral proficiency, writing skills, pre-employment and work maturity competence, and critical thinking skills.]

Competencies include the ability to read a newspaper advertisement, to use a telephone directory, or to read the instructions on a bottle of medicine, etc. Results are integrated into the adult learner's individualized Family Literacy Plan *(see sample at end of this section).*

The initial assessment is a key component of the intake procedure, and takes roughly four hours to complete. Orientation and program description sessions run approximately one hour. The CASAS can take anywhere from thirty to sixty minutes to complete. (There is no time limit.) The questionnaires and goal-setting sessions usually take about one hour to complete. Goals can be analyzed, changed or continued, based on what the adult learner wants to do. The CASAS is administered every six months; each level has a pre- and post test.

At the end of each cycle, the individual accounts of each session are attached to that cycle's goals worksheet.

Although simple in description, the Goal Sheet provides the case managers with a wealth of initial assessment information without the use of extensive formalized testing or frequently inaccurate initial self evaluations.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

The Even Start Center provides a comprehensive program for young children. Children spend time in the Center while parents are engaged in adult literacy work, or when goals for the child can best be addressed there. The Center's program brings together children of varying ages in a safe, accepting environment where they develop and play together. Through developmentally appropriate experiences and activities, children are encouraged to acquire and practice cognitive, language, socialization and motor skills. They also learn to respect each others' challenges and individuality.

As with all Even Start programming, parents are instrumental in planning and implementing the Early Childhood Program. This supports the parents' goal of 1) becoming more aware of the needs and learning styles of their own children, 2) successfully communicating with a teacher about their children, and 3) creating a community of adults who are caring for children.

Even Start recently hired an Early Childhood Specialist to plan and implement the Early Childhood Program and to supervise the Child Care Assistant. The program includes two morning playgroups per week. Families sign up for two or three playgroups each eight week cycle.

AMESBURY EVEN START EVALUATION FORM

Evaluation: 8-Week Cycle from__________ to__________

Parent Name ________________________ Date ____________

Family Literacy Staff ______________ Home-Based Visitor______________

During the cycle just finished:

WHAT DID I LEARN ABOUT MYSELF AS AN ADULT LEARNER?
Computers aren't as hard as I thought they would be. I'm getting the hang of it.

WHAT DID I LEARN ABOUT MYSELF AS A PARENT?
Sometimes my child needs my attention and sometimes my child really needs time alone.

WHAT DID I LEARN ABOUT MY CHILD?
I feel as if I better understand how my child sees the world, and also that they are very complicated!

DID YOU REACH YOUR SHORT TERM GOALS? Somewhat
IF YES, WHAT WAS MOST HELPFUL IN ACHIEVING THESE GOALS?
The workshop I attended was helpful in working toward my child's development goals. The Resume Group showed me how to sell myself on paper in order to someday get a job.

IF NO, WHAT DO YOU THINK STOOD IN YOUR WAY?
Sometimes I missed a Home-Based Visitor meeting because I had other appointments that I couldn't change but I do think I set aside time to play with my child.

WHAT EVEN START ACTIVITIES WERE MOST HELPFUL?
The parent group was very supportive and I feel like I really learned a lot from the groups that I attended.

BASED ON WHAT YOU LEARNED, WHERE DO YOU WANT TO GO FROM HERE?
I would like to attend more workshops.

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The Evaluation Form contains basic information about what went on in each session: the goal of the activity, what materials were used, who led the session, and an opportunity for the parent/adult learner to discuss what he/she learned and how he/she may transfer some idea, attitude or skill to his/her children. This allows reflection on past goals and related implementation. Changes in adult learner goals are presently ascertained by evaluating the last cycle, e.g. were the goals realistic? New goals are acknowledged on the succeeding 8-weekcycle Goal Sheet.

Measurement: the Portfolio, the Goal Sheet, and More

Parents/adult learners choose their own Even Start programming; when a parent/adult learner decides their goals, chooses what programming will support that goal, and evaluates their progress during the cycle, they are more likely to be taking charge of their own learning.

An adult learner portfolio is created at initial placement. The folder eventually includes writing samples, math work, and other content area activities. The samples are compared from time to time, and at the end of every 8-week cycle, for differences in quality. Markers are being developed to measure changes in attitudes toward education in general. These markers will help track behavioral changes — such as reading for pleasure, or writing a note to a child's teacher, or choosing one shopping center over another — from applying skills learned in the program. These important behavioral changes are often lost in traditional assessment and evaluation.

The Goal Sheet at Even Start is a multi-level tool. Used appropriately, it empowers the learner by allowing expression and realization of very specific short-term and long-term goals. The system is used in self-assessment as an adult learner builds on the information he/she reflects upon, and as the work is continuously defined and redefined for the future. Responsibility for the success of the student's program is squarely placed upon the adult learner. There is also ample opportunity for constructive critical feedback about our program which we value and incorporate into our work.

To strengthen the evaluation, staff observations and participant interviews at the end of each 8-week program cycle also help to determine participants' progress in meeting their literacy goals. Two times per month, families will be asked to complete a short activity evaluation to determine if project activities are meeting their needs and are relevant to their goals/plans, enjoyment, issues critical to them, and their relationship with their child or children.

From the process of on-going assessment by parents at our center has come the stated need for development of skills leading toward employment, so that parents can become, or can continue to be, adequate providers for their children's physical as well as emotional needs.

With this in mind, Even Start has initiated the development of a "Next Steps" program for those parents who may be moving on to a certification program, vocational training, or some other form of continuing education. New legislation for all Even Start programs requires that service be continued for parents/adult learners even if their children no longer fall between the ages of birth to seven years. We have envisioned that when this does occur, many of the continuing parents/adult learners will be in need of academic and counseling support to help them make the transition into their next steps. ☑

Parents/adult learners choose their own Even Start programming; when a parent/adult learner decides their goals, chooses what programming will support that goal, and evaluates their progress during the cycle, they are more likely to be taking charge of their own learning.

The Informal Reading Inventory: Highlighting Connections & Capabilities

by
Eileen Barry

Workplace Education Project
Labor Education Center
UMass Dartmouth

Returning to school after many years is a high risk and frightening step for most adult learners. When they make the courageous decision to enroll in classes, it is important to provide initial experiences which are positive and validating. While the learners have skills which require improvement, they also must be reminded of all that they know and are capable of doing already. It is also important that they see they are joining a community of learners who share similar experiences, frustrations, and accomplishments.

For these reasons, we have decided that the TABE (Test of Adult Basic Education) assessment test, which evaluates reading and math skills, is unsuitable for our program.

The Workplace Education Project offers six GED, Pre-GED, and ESL classes in five different sites in New Bedford and Fall River. Originally, the classes were comprised primarily of Portuguese immigrants who were employed in garment and small manufacturing industries. With the changing economy, however, a growing number are now unemployed.

Previously, when students enrolled in the Pre-GED and GED classes, we asked them to complete the TABE Survey test. Noting the high level of anxiety of new students, however, it always bothered us that we welcomed them to the program with such an intimidating and frustrating tool.

After the students completed the assessment, it was *our* turn to struggle with it. We felt frustrated as we looked at the answers, both correct and incorrect, because we had no way of knowing why the student chose a particular answer.

After scoring the test, the struggle would continue. We would confer with other teachers in the program and determine, based upon the TABE score, whether the learner was better suited for the Pre-GED or GED class. We would make a "good guess" as to which class to place the students and we would watch how they did in class to determine if the level of the class truly met their needs.

Often, we would find that we had misplaced the learners and would move them to a different class. We usually found that the learners' comprehension skills were much better than the TABE had indicated. When they were in a relaxed setting, reading relevant and interesting material, and explaining their interpretations and reactions, it became clear to us and to them that they possessed many more skills than the TABE acknowledged.

It became apparent to us that it would be necessary to develop assessment tools which better reflect the strengths and needs of the learner. We decided to create an Informal Reading Inventory, comprised of relevant, interesting reading selections followed by questions which enable the learners to realize their strengths as well as areas which require improvement. A math assessment was designed which focuses on what learners already know and which accommodates the European backgrounds of most of the students. We also created an interest survey to identify learners' goals, interests, and preferred learning styles. While all three tools are important for assessing our learners, this article will focus on the Informal Reading Inventory. *[Editor's note: see articles by Kelly and Whiton in Volume One of Adventures in Assessment for more information on Informal Reading Inventories and Miscue Analysis.]*

FOLLOWING THE LEARNERS' LEAD

We determined that an ideal source of reading material for the Informal Reading Inventory (IRI) was the learners themselves. Previous participants in the program had written and published an anthology of writing entitled *Learning to Fly*. These stories covered a wide range of issues such as families, automobiles, immigration, and learning. *[The stories are reprinted following this narrative.]* After using the Raygor Readability Formula *(see box below)* to determine the reading levels of the stories, it became clear that in addition to a wide range of subject matter the stories also reflected a wide range of reading levels. After supplementing the anthology with a few stories taken from *Sharing Our Thoughts*, the SABES Southeast Writing Magazine, we had stories with reading levels ranging from 2.5 to 10.0. (It is important to note that we used the Raygor Readability Formula to confirm the estimates that we had made about the reading level of the passages. We thought using a standardized measure would add more validity to the IRI, but continue to believe that readability formulas should be used with caution because they fail to consider many factors, such as level of interest and learner background, which have a strong influence on reading comprehension.)

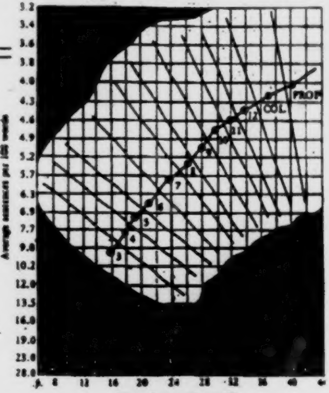
After choosing the stories, we developed questions to accompany each of eleven passages. Some questions require short answers while others ask for more extensive writing. In addition to assessing learners' reading abilities, we then have writing samples to review. This is an added benefit, for we did not get an indication of the learners' writing when we used the TABE test. Since writing is a required skill for the GED test and a focus of the class, the sample offers

We determined that an ideal source of reading material for the Informal Reading Inventory was the learners themselves... we have found that learners are the best judges of their own abilities.

THE RAYGOR READABILITY FORMULA

(Baldwin and Kaufman, 1979)

1. Count out a 100-word passage from the selection or reading you have chosen. If the reading is long, it may be more accurate to choose a passage from the beginning and from the end and to take the average. If they are different, choose a third passage and find the averages. For most low readings, though, one 100-word passage should be enough.
2. Count the number of sentences in each passage. Count a half sentence as .5.
3. Count the number of words in each passage containing six or more letters.
4. Find the points on the Raygor graph.



Raygor readability formula chart

The learners receive the eleven stories, each copied on a separate piece of paper with a set of questions. We explain that the stories were written by people who were once in the same position as they. The new students are always excited by this and become more interested in reading the material.

important information. Multiple choice questions accompany some of the passages since the learners will eventually be required to answer this type of question, but they are able to choose more than one answer if they wish. If the student answers the question correctly, we know that she or he has understood the passage and is familiar with the multiple-choice format. If the learner chooses more than one answer, we gain insight into his or her thought processes.

The learners receive the eleven stories, each copied on a separate piece of paper with a set of questions. We explain that the stories were written by people who were once in the same position as they. The new students are always excited by this and become more interested in reading the material. We explain further that they should decide which stories they want to read. They are encouraged to read as many as possible, but are assured that if a story is too difficult or of no interest to them, they should not feel required to read it.

Because the Pre-GED and GED classes meet simultaneously and since we do not have a counselor present to administer the assessment, we are unable to listen to the students read the passages and to conduct a miscue analysis. The learners work independently and read the passages silently.

When we review the assessment, we do not use an official scoring procedure and do not determine a grade level. Basically, we use the information and our knowledge of the levels at which the GED and Pre-GED classes are working to place the new student with the group that seems most appropriate. Since we have implemented the use of the IRI, we have a 99% successful placement rate! (On one occasion, a student's nerves interfered with his ability to read the stories and answer the questions.)

When we discuss our assessment tools with teachers in other programs, they often raise the issue of funders requiring TABE scores or results from other standardized tests. It is important to note that DOE-funded programs are not mandated to use standardized tests. If programs are receiving funds from other sources which do impose this requirement, we feel that it would still benefit the learners and the teachers to use alternative assessment tools in the initial assessment phase. After students adjust to being in class, they could then complete the standardized test. While the scores from the standardized measure would satisfy funders, the results from the alternative assessment can be used effectively in practice.

We have found that learners are the best judges of their own abilities. They read the stories that are written at their level and answer the questions within their capabilities. This provides a positive initial experience because they determine what they are capable of doing rather than focusing on what they don't yet know.

It is also an inspiring experience as they read the words of people who were once in a similar situation and who have now reached their goals or made great progress. Tools such as the Informal Reading Inventory meet our goal to create positive initial experiences for learners so they will begin to feel more confident about their decision to return to school and about their ability to reach their goals.

STORIES

#1. LEARNING TO (FLY) SWIM

Back in the summer vacations of 1986, I used to go everyday to the rocky beach in my little town. I used to go there with some of my best friends that could go with me. They are Gil, Miguel and Alberto. Some of my other friends were not allowed by their mothers. They wouldn't let them go. In the beach we would lie ten minutes in the sun, then after, it was time for the bath in the small tide pools. It was like that every day, even Sundays.

The only problem at those days was I didn't know how to swim. Miguel did, so he was going to teach us, me and Alberto. At first I went from rock to rock, first a few meters in shallow water. After half an hour of lessons we would get tired, so we would explore the pools. Sponges, sea urchins, jelly fish, sea stars, algae and coral were some of the creatures we used to look for. Although we didn't know anything about them, we knew that sea urchins and jelly fish were the ones to stay away from.

Like I was telling... we used to just go from rock to rock. With some patience from Miguel, a month after we already knew our way across larger pools. After that Miguel said that we could swim on the open sea. At that time I felt a new kind of freedom in a new world. but I also thought, "Be careful, this new world is unknown, after learning to (fly) I don't want to fall."

Joao Ferreira

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

#2. MY TRUCK

It was one of the last ones built in 1950, by the Chevrolet Company. It is a 1950 Chevrolet, half-ton pick up with several 1951 parts. A rugged truck built for work, it came from the factory without turn signals, seat belts, carpeting or a radio.

Bought by a contractor, the truck was put to work right away. Everyday the truck was used to haul tools and supplies to and from different jobs. This truck was worked for nine years without any major problems. In 1959 the contractor gave up his business and sold the truck.

A carpenter who had worked for the contractor, bought the truck for one dollar. He added a few accessories, ladder racks, turn signals and three wooden tool boxes. Now the truck was ready to go back to work. For ten more years the truck was used for work. The motor was worn, the rear springs were shot from being over-loaded. There were dents and rust from years of work and bad weather. Still running, it was taken off the road; replaced by a station wagon in 1969.

I was home on leave when I saw it in the back yard. I looked it over and knew it needed a lot of work. The more I thought about it, the more I wanted it. The last day of my leave I bought it. It was put in a garage for storage.

It was late in 1974 when the truck was put back on the road. Now there was a newer Pontiac motor and transmission under the hood. The rear axle and springs had also been replaced. The electrical system also had to be converted from six volts to twelve volts. It needed some bodywork but that would wait.

Put together, mainly for transportation, it wasn't long before the truck was put back to work. There were moving jobs, runs to the dump and scrap yards. It also did a few tow jobs and hauled a trailer. In 1976 the truck was put back into storage, replaced by a van.

It's now 1991, after 14 years of storage the truck has been brought back to life. This time it has been completely rewired to accommodate all the new accessories. Under the hood is a new 350 cubic inch Chevy motor. In need of some body work and paint, it sits patiently in a heated garage waiting for the day it will again be on the road.

This time will be different. Its working days are over. The next time it sees the road, it will be for cruising and transportation.

Eddie De Mello Jr.

#3. THE FAMILY

The family is a place where people love and feel loved, a place of understanding and forgiving, a place of happiness and sometimes sadness. The family is where everybody feels comforted. It is where sometimes we have discussions to fix things, a place where everybody respects and is respected. Family is a place where we form a small society to go in a big society. I think the family is the most important thing we all have because all of us in the family are loved and feel loved. Everybody helps everybody.

Good things happen like a marriage or a new born child and it makes us happy. Sometimes, when somebody gets sick or dies, sadness invades the family. A family is where parents respect children and children respect parents and grandparents, where sometimes discussions arise because of how children behave, because of money or lifestyles. If we are good families, societies will be good too. In conclusion, family is the best thing everybody has: that goes from love to all other good things that can exist. I don't know what I would be without my family. (I feel very sorry for people who don't have a family, especially the homeless or people who live alone.)

Maria A. Alves

#4. CAR TECHNOLOGY

One of the most competitive sectors of the world's economy is the automotive sector. So companies worldwide are largely tuned into research and technological development. They don't only need technology for quality, but also to be a step ahead of the competition. In the last few years, the most amazing of these developments are active suspension and four wheel steering.

In the case of active suspensions, they are still in the development phase. Some firms are taking the risk to sell them commercially. These are Mitsubishi, Dodge, and Infiniti. There are also the "semi-active" suspension which is standard equipment on all Lincoln models. It has been just a couple of years since Lotus Formula I car used active suspension. Lotus is still one of the technology leaders. Active suspension is one of the most important recent automotive developments, which contributes to a bumpless ride.

Four wheel steering has been a long time dream for major car companies. It was brought to life by Honda, using a simple mechanic system within its model "Prelude SI." Mazda also developed a more complicated electronic system. Both proved to be a big improvement in performance and are also a good selling point.

The list could go on with aerodynamics, alternative fuels, and "Kansei" engineering. But in conclusion, one can say that, "Car industry is the first to work for consumers." Now we can be sure that companies are trying to do the best for us and our environment.

Joao Ferreira

#5. MY FAMILY

We were four brothers in the family. Until I came to the USA, I lived in a city called Curitaba. That's the capital of the Parama's state.

In 1983 we lost our brother and my house stayed sad. We missed him.

In 1984 we adopted a little girl. The happiness came again to us because she is a smart girl.

Now we feel the loss of my brother, but we also have a little girl.

Samuel Sales Pires

#6. WAR

As a child, growing up in World War Two, I found it to be very exciting. Being only six years old, I thought it was great when the sirens went off. We had to shut all the lights off and pull the window shades down.

My sisters and I would run to the windows and peek out at the air raid wardens. They walked up and down the streets protecting our neighborhoods. We were unaware, I know at our ages, of the Jewish people and how they were murdered. Also innocent people who were killed trying to hide them from the German soldiers. We were too young to read a paper or to understand what was being said on the radio.

Today I am reliving another war. This time I am fully aware of what is going on, and I do not find it very exciting. I only hope the young men and women who are in Saudi Arabia know what they are fighting for.

It is sad that we have to go to war in other countries to help them fight for their freedom. At the same time people in the United States take their freedom for granted. We are lucky to be living in a democracy where we are free to speak out for what we believe in, to go to the church of our choice, many of us are never satisfied. We should look around us and see how other people live, and we would appreciate what we have.

Betty Coderre

#7. HARBINGER

Jon could still see the mynah, his mind still heard its piercing cry. Jon had seen this selfsame four previous times in his life. Four dreams that he could never forget, and now for the fifth time he did it. Invaded his dreams. Another nightmare that would haunt him throughout his days.

He was ten the first time the dream appeared to him. He wakes up screaming and his mother comes in to comfort him. She tells him it was only a bad dream. The next day Jon's grandfather died of a heart attack. It was a bad dream, nothing more.

At 14, the dream returned. Once again Jon was terrified and he somehow remembered having seen that bird some other time. The next day there was a substitute teacher at school. His class was told that their teacher had passed on. No further explanation was given the students. Jon knew when he had seen the mynah before, and he was scared.

Once more did Jon dream of the damned mynah. He was 19, and in college now when he was called in to identify the body of his roommate. His best friend's cycle had been hit by a truck.

The next nightmare of the bird is the hardest for Jon to accept. For he remembers it with shame. His wife of three years had just given birth to a boy. It was his first child. He was so scared for them, for he knew the meaning of his dream. The shame he recalls is of the relief he felt when his mother called him and his father had just died in his sleep.

And now after six years, the dream again. Jon lay in bed trembling. Someone he loved had died, or was about to die. He knew there was nothing he could do. After having composed himself as best he could, Jon got out of bed, he cleaned up, dressed, and went to his kitchen to have breakfast. He was finishing up his coffee as the phone rang.

Michael Woodmansee

#8. THE DAY WHEN I IMMIGRATED TO AMERICA

It was a happy day thinking that I was coming to America. Every person talked about it as big, rich, and beautiful country. I was anxious to come to see if it was true! Even so, I was very sad to leave my little and beautiful country too.

In my country I wasn't rich and I had to work hard. I left my family, friends, animals, rivers, and springs, the Sundays when we could rest and dress up, the dances where we could find a boy friend.

When at the airport, waiting to leave on the plane, I was sad and happy and scared. When in the plane I was anxious to get to Boston to know how it would be. When still in the air I could see a dark city. Right away I could see the difference from Lisbon to Boston, Lisbon so bright and colorful and Boston so dark.

When out of the airport, my grandfather was waiting with the taxi. I was so happy to see him but that taxi was so old and dirty. Soon I started to look and see that what people there were telling me wasn't true, so many old things, the houses of wood, the food wasn't too good. Right away I started to remember my house and my country where I grew until I came.

It was like I had nothing. Thank God my parents and brothers came with me. I was so sad nothing would brighten me, in part too because I had left my boyfriend. It was so different from what I used to do. Days passed and I went to work. It was so different from what I used to do. Soon I started in piece work. It made me so afraid, seeing the man with the clock taking the time.

Days, months and years passed. I went to school for a short time during the night. It was very difficult, but slowly I learned a little bit, how to speak and read a little. Twenty and five years already passed. I miss my country Portugal, still. Today I love this country, America. I am a happy citizen too. I forgot all the bad things and changed them for the good it had to offer me.

Maria C. Alves

#9. A TOY

It was long, long ago. I was about five years old. My grandmother was sitting in front of her bedroom's window. She had called for me. When I got there I saw her with her glasses on, holding gently a rag doll. She had just finished it. My grandmother was there, smiling, while holding the most beautiful doll that I had ever seen. She gave me the doll, just like that. It was not Christmas, or any other kind of commemoration, and it was my first and the only toy I had in all my childhood.

My mother wanted to sell the doll to make some money, but my grandmother said there could not be money enough in the world that paid for her granddaughter's happiness, and she reaffirmed her intention that she had made that doll with love to be given to her granddaughter Zana. The doll doesn't exist anymore, but my grandmother's words and the doll image still live in my heart. I can clearly remember it.

The doll body was made from white cloth that my grandmother used to make sheets and pillow cases. Her underwear, little panties, was light pink, the same kind of cloth that my grandmother used to make our own underwear. Her dress was hand-knitted from lamb wool that my grandmother had dyed pink previously. Her socks were hand crocheted from pink cotton thread and her shoes were made from lamb fur. Her hair was made from brown wool and her eyelashes and eyebrows from black cotton thread and her lips from rep. It was the most beautiful rag doll I had ever seen in my life. I felt fascinated, overjoyed, delighted with my doll; but my attention almost failed on a particularity — my doll was wearing socks and shoes, while I was barefoot.

Maria Z. Santos

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

#10. GED

I quit school when I was 16 years old because of financial reasons. I had to help my mother with the bills and my two younger brothers. I had many different jobs. My last job lasted for 22 years. I would like to have stayed there until I retired but plant closure took that dream.

When I was younger, I could walk across the street and get a job. That's how easy it was. If I didn't like that one, I could just as easy go somewhere else and would get hired on the spot.

Now plants, corporations, and companies want high school diplomas and if you don't have one, most good paying jobs won't even consider your application. Some places won't even tell you that's why you didn't get hired There are a few places left that don't require a diploma, but they are getting fewer and farther apart.

I was a stitcher, driller, solderer, tire builder, supervisor and injection molder to name a few. I have learned a lot up to this point. When I think about my life and past jobs, there have been a lot of things accomplished and one or two failures along the way.

Getting a GED is not as easy as it sounds, for my anyway. Through the classes I am learning all over again and I am determined to get my diploma..

Marie Lucas

#11. THE WISH

Arthur had always been fascinated with the past. As a young boy, he used to collect old stamps and coins. Strange pieces of metal and rock he would scrounge in his neighborhood were precious Indian relics or stone age tools to his young imagination.

Now he was in college studying ancient history. For the summer, he was lucky enough to be included in the field trip to Israel to work at an archaeological dig.

It was uncomfortably hot the day that Arthur, carrying his shovel and camera, climbed down into a newly excavated dwelling. He welcomed the cool air in the dim interior. After working carefully in the north corner for an hour, he was scraping his shovel through the sand when he heard it clink against metal. His heartbeat increasing with excitement, he bent down to examine his find. It was an old brass lantern, rather sooty near the lip.

Pulling out his shirttail, Arthur started to buff the grime off his lantern. Immediately, he began to feel light headed and dizzy; the room grew darker and an unsettling feeling of spinning passed through him. He found himself surrounded by greenish vapors that congealed into the shape of a man. "I am the genie of the lamp," the voice boomed. "You have awoken me from my eternal slumber; your wish is my command!"

Arthur almost fainted from the shock. He sweated and trembled. Finally he managed to speak in a high nervous voice. "I wish to go back in time and witness the construction of the Great Pyramid at Giza!"

No sooner than the last word left his lips, he found himself in the desert. He looked down and saw that he was wearing a long white robe. He looked up and saw a half built pyramid. Nearby were men also dressed in long white robes. They were straining to push a huge stone block along little wooden rollers. Arthur looked desperately for his lamp, but it was nowhere to be found. The crack of a whip behind his right ear startled him into awareness. Approaching was a heavily armoured Egyptian soldier flailing his whip. "Get back to work," he commanded, "or you will be thrown to the jackals!".

Timur Turkdogen

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

QUESTIONS

Story #1. Learning to (Fly) Swim

1. The author of the story probably lived in
    - a. New York City
    - b. Portugal
    - c. New Bedford
2. Miguel taught the author to
    - a. fly
    - b. explore pools
    - c. swim
3. What do you think is the main idea of this story?

Story #2. My Truck

1. Which alteration or alterations came first?
    - a. ladder racks
    - b. carpeting
    - c. turn signals
    - d. both a and b
    - e. both a and c
2. It is clear from the story that the author
    - a. is a carpenter
    - b. has just bought a truck
    - c. is proud of his truck

Story #3. The Family

1. The author believes that good families
    - a. don't have arguments
    - b. are important for society
    - c. live together in one house
2. What would be a good title for this story?
3. On another piece of paper, write your own description of "a family."

Story #4. Car Technology

1. According to the author, one of the most important advances in car technology is
    - a. alternative fuels
    - b. electronic systems
    - c. four wheel steering
2. The author believes that the car industry spends a great deal of time on research due to
    - a. consumer complaints
    - b. competition from other car manufacturers
    - c. governmental regulations
3. The author says that car companies are trying to do the best for us and our environment. Do you agree? Why or why not?

Story #5. My Family

1. The author of the story was sad because
    - a. he moved to the USA
    - b. his brother was lost
    - c. his brother died
2. What made the author happy?

Story #6. War

1. The job of the air raid warden was to
    - a. protect neighborhoods
    - b. fight in World War Two
    - c. turn sirens off
2. As a young girl, the author thought war was exciting because
    - a. innocent people were killed
    - b. she thought it was a game
    - c. she could listen to war stories on the radio

3. Some examples of democracy mentioned in the story are
    a. freedom of religion
    b. freedom of choice
    c. freedom of expression
    d. both a and b
    e. both a and c

4. The author believes that
    a. people in the United States take their freedom for granted
    b. it is good to fight for the freedom of other countries
    c. life was better when she was younger

Story #7. Harbinger

1. A "mynah" is a
    a. nightmare
    b. story about death
    c. bird

2. Jon was ashamed when his father died because
    a. he dreamed that his father died
    b. he was glad that his baby did not die
    c. he had an argument with his father

3. What do you think happens after the phone rings at the end of the story? (use another paper if you'd like)

Story #8. The Day When I Immigrated to America

1. The author was excited to come to the U.S. because
    a. she expected a beautiful, rich country
    b. she wanted to find a job
    c. she didn't like her country

2. How did the author feel at work?
    a. excited
    b. nervous
    c. fortunate

3. How did the author describe the U.S.?

Story # 9. A Toy

1. From the story we learn that the little girl
    a. was very poor
    b. had many toys
    c. sold the doll to make some money for her family

2. The doll was important to the little girl because
    a. the doll wore shoes
    b. it was a gift of love
    c. the doll was worth a lot of money

3. Describe the doll in your own words.

Story #10. GED

1. Why does the author want her GED?

2. Why do you want your GED?

Story #11. The Wish

1. What is the theme of "The Wish?"
    a. Exploring is dangerous.
    b. Be careful what you wish for.
    c. It's better to live in the present.

2. Write what you think will happen to Arthur next.

SAMPLE ANSWERS TO STORIES 10 & 11

So she can get a job.

2. Why do you want your GED?

So I can further my education and become a Medical Secretary.

Story #11 The Wish

1. What is the theme of "The Wish?"
    - a. Exploring is dangerous.
    - [✓ b. Be careful what you wish for.]
    - c. It's better to live in the present.

2. Write what you think will happen to Arthur next.

He will be put to work to help build the Great Pyramid a Giza, before he realizes that he can wish he was back in the present.

SAMPLE ANSWERS TO STORIES 10 & 11

FOR FINICIAL REASONS

2. Why do you want your GED?

I WANT MY GED BECOUSE TODAY COMPANY'S WANT PEOPLE WHO HAS IT.

Story #11 The Wish

1. What is the theme of "The Wish?"
   a. Exploring is dangerous..
   [✓ b.] Be careful what you wish for.
   c. It's better to live in the present.

2. Write what you think will happen to Arthur next.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT IS GOING TO HAPPEN, I DON'T TINK HE'll HAVE FAN.

Ongoing

The ESL Classroom as Community: How Self Assessment Can Work

by
Dulany
Alexander

Operation Bootstrap,
Lynn

I teach English as a second language at Operation Bootstrap in Lynn. Our population is mostly Hispanic adults. We have three levels, with about 75 students per year enrolled. One-third of our students are welfare recipients, one-third are funded under our Department of Education grant, and one-third are funded under JTPA monies. This means that our funders mandate the BEST test for measuring both student gains and our program's performance.

This definition of progress as "moving from one BEST level to the next" can mean, that for learners who don't keep "progressing," we don't get paid. It can also leave little room for learners or teachers to assess learning as it relates to learner goals or interests or to how the curriculum or instruction meets these goals or interests.

It is for all these reasons and more that we decided to focus on developing assessment tools that would help us and our students look at what and how they were learning.

WHY WE TOOK A NEW LOOK

Some time ago, we noted a pattern in our student enrollments and "terminations." Students who entered the program at Level 1 were likely to advance to Level 2, yet few of them advanced to Level 3. Level 3 was largely comprised of students who entered at Level 3 or who had spent only a brief time in Level 2.

One of the factors at work was discouragement. After the dramatic learning curve that is almost certain to result from attending class for 20 hours a week, the normal leveling of the curve at Level 2 felt to the students like failure, either theirs or ours. Ours is a student centered program; the students can see that their choices determine what is taught in class. Yet we were failing to help students gain control over what and how they learned.

In an attempt to start thinking about the what and how of learning, I devised a weekly evaluation form to use within our program. Some of my goals were:

For Me:

- To have a better sense of what's happening in the students' lives so that we can build on that in class
- To know which activities engage them
- To address short-term problems
- To understand each student's measure of success.

For the Students:

- To see the week as a collection of activities
- To recognize how and when English is used outside of class (and how to extend those activities)
- To separate personality (notably the teacher's) from classwork, to be able

to critique the activities without anyone feeling defensive

- To help determine the direction of the class
- To isolate problems so they become workable
- To identify individual growth and successes
- To learn to set (and articulate) short term goals.

We used the weekly evaluation form (see appendix) in our program at all three levels for several months. Although the class time necessary to complete the evaluation decreased as the students became more familiar with it, it was a pretty dry activity that qualified as the week's most boring activity. Gradually, each teacher found other ways to meet her own goals.

GROUP ASSESSMENT

I came to see that my goals could be better served by other means than this form. For example, criticism of the class activities didn't need to be a weekly

Although the class time necessary to complete the evaluation decreased as the students became more familiar with it, it was a pretty dry activity that qualified as the week's most boring activity. Gradually, each teacher found other ways to meet her own goals.

WEEKLY EVALUATION FORM

Name: **# Hrs in Class:** **Week Ending:**

1) In class or out:

I learned these new words: ____________________

I practiced this grammar: ____________________

My biggest problem was: ____________________

My biggest success was: ____________________

2) What/where/when/how often:

I read: ____________________

I spoke: ____________________

I wrote: ____________________

I listened: ____________________

3) Class activities this week:

The most fun: ____________________

The most boring: ____________________

The most helpful: ____________________

The most confusing: ____________________

4) I need help with: ____________________

event or done individually. It is easily done as a group activity. We now periodically brainstorm a list of the week's activities and the students "vote" with one of four descriptors that the group chooses (fun, helpful, interesting, confusing...). The vote invariably shows that every activity suits some students and not others.

What is indispensable is that the classroom activities include asking each student to focus on his or her specific learning process: what's working, what's not working, how are you attacking the problem, and how can you be helped?

What is indispensable is that the classroom activities include asking each student to focus on his or her specific learning process: what's working, what's not working, how are you attacking the problem, and how can you be helped? If the student has no clearer idea of his or her own situation than "I need help with English," then the process of learning this language is completely out of his or her control. If it doesn't seem to be happening, the student sees no choices other than to give up or try to find another teacher who can "make it happen."

Few of our students attended college; the majority experienced too few successes to remain in high school until graduation. Now they are adults with other responsibilities. The biggest success may be finding a new apartment; the biggest problem may have been a sick child. These events could certainly overshadow any language acquisition goals. If that is the reality of the student's life, student and teacher need to realize that language learning can not always be the highest priority. Some weeks, intentionally exposing oneself to English reading/writing/speaking/listening wherever possible is all that can be done.

SELF-ASSESSMENT IN THE CLASSROOM

But in a more ideal week, the student needs to know how to advance the overall goal of "learning English." The process starts with a self-assessment exercise. Most students have a pretty good sense of how they compare to their classmates at a particular skill. For most students, it follows that each has strengths and each has weaknesses. In my class, I begin by asking each student to name which is the hardest and which is the easiest for him/her: reading, writing, listening, or speaking.

We work from this crude self-assessment to refine our definition of the problem. For example, if Carmen says that speaking is the hardest for her, does she mean pronunciation, or grammar, or vocabulary, or shyness? If the former is her answer, the group brainstorms ways for her to work on pronunciation in school and at home. If another student's strength is pronunciation, we look for ways to use that student as a resource. We work with a volunteer tutor, if appropriate. Having agreed on what language issue is the special target of each student, we as a group can be ready to offer ongoing suggestions and encouragement. More important in the long run is that the student learns to use self-assessment and goal setting as tools to manage the immense task of learning English.

Language learning is a lengthy process for most of us. None of our students will master English before leaving our program. Some students will leave to work, some because they must move too far from school, some because their families can't afford their time for school, and some because they've decided that "perfect" English is not a realistic short-term goal. The skills that enable the student to treat learning English as a personal project, whether in school or out, begin with assessment and goal setting. These are probably as valuable as anything else we teach. ☑

Tape Journals in the Oral Skills Class

by
Eileen Hughes

LaGuardia Community College

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In an oral skills or pronunciation class, students can be assigned a spoken journal on cassette tape just as they are assigned a written journal in a writing class. The tape journal is as valuable as the written in promoting fluency. It becomes a record of students' individual explorations in English and provides the medium for a dialogue between the teacher and each student.

PROCEDURE

Ask students to purchase a cassette tape. Tell them they are responsible for completing a fixed number of "entries" during the course. Ask them to speak on a given topic for at least five minutes each week and explain that, after they hand in the journal, the teacher will listen to it and respond on the tape. You can suggest that they not read (from printed material), but instead speak spontaneously, stopping the tape where they need to and continuing again.

When you return the tapes, instruct students to listen to their own voice and then to the teacher's comments. Next, they should bring the tape back to the end of their last recording and make a new entry, taping over the teacher's comments (which may be long-winded!).

If possible, give students access to a tape recorder before class begins or during break-time, in case they do not have a recorder at home.

Try to return the tapes with your comments to the students as soon as possible. (It's a good idea to have the students hand in their tapes on different days. This lightens the teacher's burden.)

ASSIGNMENTS

The first assignment should allow students to relax and get comfortable with the medium. Suggestions: tell me about yourself...your family....your country. Further suggestions include: What makes you laugh? Tell me about something you are good at doing...about a good friend...about a dream you had.

Give assignments focused on improving students' weakest skills. For example, for practice pronouncing past tense endings: Tell me about an experience in the past, either something that happened in your country or something that happened during your first days in New York.

From here, assignments can become individualized; each entry can set the direction that the next one will take.

FEEDBACK

Answer genuinely. Thank the students for sharing their stories, adventures, and often remarkable insights.

As with a written journal, it can be argued that teachers' comments should focus on content and not point out errors, although the latter is sometimes irresistible!

Note: It's a good idea to make notes as you listen to the students' tapes. This will improve your memory when responding and will also become a useful record of students' needs, interests and history.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

Ask students, once they've become comfortable with the medium: Tell me how you feel in the class. What do you like best about the class? Least? How can the class help you more? (Be sure to provide examples: more listening exercises? more homework? less homework? more pronunciation?) Or: Listen to your own voice on the tape. What words are hardest to understand? What are your strongest skills? your weakest skills? (Again, provide examples.)

Elicit from your students (periodically or midway through the course) what they feel is most valuable about this experience and discuss the tapes in class. Remind students upon completion of the course of the value of the tape journal. Encourage them to continue with it, as they would a written journal, even after the class ends.

As with a written journal, it can be argued that teachers' comments should focus on content and not point out errors, although the latter is sometimes irresistible!

USES

- ➢ For diagnostic purposes: common and consistent errors can become the focus of future lessons.
- ➢ For assessment of fluency of speech and contextualized pronunciation.
- ➢ For building students' awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses.

FURTHER USES

- ➢ For class evaluation: students often find it easier to make discrete and constructive comments on the tapes than in person.
- ➢ For building students' self-confidence: most students respond positively to hearing themselves speaking English. ☑

What Counts?

Knowing Math and Passing the GED

by
Sally Spencer

Care Center, Holyoke

I have been the math teacher at the Care Center, a school for pregnant and parenting teenage mothers in Holyoke, for a little over a year. This by no means makes me an authority on evaluation in the adult mathematics classroom. But as a member of the ABE Math Team, I've had the opportunity to think about it a lot lately. I'd like to share some ideas and some questions.

In November, the ABE Math Team received a grant from the National Institute for Literacy through Holyoke Community College. The purpose of this grant is to review and adapt the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics' *Curriculum and Evaluation Standards for School Mathematics* (the *Standards*) for the adult education community. To accomplish this, the ABE Math Team has sub-divided into workgroups focusing on either the ESL, the ABE, the GED classroom or workplace education. It is through participating in the ABE Math Team that I have been focusing my attention on the "Evaluation Standards" at the GED level.

The *Standards* were written as a response to the publication in 1983 of *A Nation at Risk* which made it clear that the mathematics education which the nation's students were receiving at that time was inadequate. Over three years, mathematics educators from across the nation wrote, tested, revised and, in 1989, finally adopted the *Curriculum and Evaluation Standards for School Mathematics*.

The *Standards* reflect a new vision of what it means to "do" and "know" math. In its introduction, the *Standards* lists its societal goals as: mathematically literate workers; a citizenry of lifelong learners; opportunity for all learners; and an informed electorate. For the individual student, that means it is no longer enough to be arithmetically proficient. Instead, the *Standards* hope to ensure that students will: learn to value mathematics; become confident in their own abilities; become mathematical problem solvers; and be able to communicate and reason mathematically. To that end, the *Standards* have reprioritized the emphasis on various topics in math instruction, and stress new methods of teaching and evaluation. The curriculum is separated into three sections: grades K-4, 5-8 and 9-12; evaluation is the final fourth part.

So how can this national mathematical movement be incorporated in the ABE classroom? How does that impact assessment? What does this mean for the adult learner?

Some of the issues which I have been able to identify which make evaluation in the GED classroom distinct from the traditional K-12 setting are:

- ➢ grading is not an issue in the adult classroom;
- ➢ intake evaluation is an essential component for admission to the GED classroom;

> "The vision of mathematics education in the standards places new demands on instruction and forces us to reassess the manner and methods by which we chart our student's progress. In an instructional environment that demands deeper understanding of mathematics, testing instruments that call for only the identification of single correct responses no longer suffice. Instead, our instruments must reflect the scope and intent of our instructional program to have students solve problems, reason and communicate. Furthermore, the instruments must enable the teacher to understand student's perceptions of mathematical ideas and processes and their ability to function in a mathematical context. At the same time, they must be sensitive enough to help teachers identify individual areas of difficulty in order to improve instruction." *(NCTM Standards)*.

- many adult students bring to the classroom a fairly traditional, narrow and rigid preconception of what it means to "know" math, and a long history and a strong sense of their own abilities (or disabilities) within the context of that definition; and, most importantly,
- the ultimate evaluation for the GED student is successful completion of the state administered GED exam.

How do these differences affect the evaluation standards? I confess, I am one of the converted. I believe strongly in the vision of the math class as advocated by the NCTM. As part of my work with the ABE Math Team, I have adapted from page 191 of the *Standards* the following NCTM evaluation guidelines for the GED classroom:

INCREASED ATTENTION	**DECREASED ATTENTION**
Assessing what students know and how they think about mathematics	Assessing what students do not know
Having assessment be an integral part of teaching	Having assessment be simply counting correct answers
Focusing on a broad range of mathematical tasks and taking a holistic view of mathematics	Focusing on a large number of specific and isolated skills
Developing problem situations that require the applications of a number of mathematical ideas	Using exercises or word problems requiring only one or two skills
Using multiple assessment techniques, including written, oral and demonstration formats in individual and in group contexts	Using only individualized written exercises and tests, because group work is cheating
Using calculators, computers and manipulatives in some assessment processes	Excluding calculators, computers, and manipulatives from all assessment processes
Using the standardized GED test as only one of many indicators of progress	Using the standardized GED test as the only indicator of success

What kinds of assessment instruments, both formal and informal, can I find or develop to help bridge the gap between promoting, reasoning, communicating and making connections and "getting-the-right-answer" on the GED test?

Admittedly, while these are worthwhile goals to promote students' growth as informed citizens and empowered mathematicians, it is equally essential that teachers do not ignore their GED student's priorities. Passing the GED test, which still tests for "single correct responses", is the primary goal of the GED student. The goals of developing a problem solving attitude, being able to communicate in mathematical terms, being able to reason mathematically and being able to see mathematical connections to their everyday life can seem, at best, secondary to the students and, at worst, irrelevant to them.

I believe it is important to allow time in the GED mathematics class to discuss these additional goals so that the students have a chance to voice their expectations and identify and incorporate these new ideas of what it means to "know" math, while at the same time acknowledging that passing the GED test is a long-term objective.

I am planning to continue to explore ways to resolve this dichotomy. My next question in this quest is: what kinds of assessment instruments, both formal and informal, can I find or develop to help bridge the gap between promoting, reasoning, communicating and making connections and "getting-the-right-answer" on the GED test? ☑

Editor's note: Please write to Sally c/o Adventures in Assessment your thoughts, ideas, or assessment instruments that explore this dichotomy in teaching math in a GED setting. If you have some experience with math assessment not at the GED level, we welcome hearing from you as well.

Voices from the Field

Through the Eyes of an ABE Interviewer

by
Nancy Jane
Venator

VISTA Volunteer
MA Dept. of Education
Bureau of Adult
Education

The GOALS Project is a field test of 10 varied components designed to lead to the development of an accountability system for adult basic education programs in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The project was initiated by the Bureau of Adult Education of the state's Department of Education, and has stated its purpose is to "define a set of indicators of program quality which are educationally sound, useful to students, teachers and funders, and not excessively time-consuming."

Volume 3 of Adventures in Assessment included a dialogue between Editor Loren McGrail and Lindy Whiton, who coordinated that part of the project which focused on alternative assessment. This section offers more insight into the GOALS effort.

Component Seven of the GOALS project seeks "to determine what factors adult learners themselves identify in evaluating their goal attainment." My objective, as a Bureau of Adult Education-trained ABE interviewer, was to find this information by asking five questions to students across the state: What brought you here that makes you stay? what would make you leave? if you were in charge of the money, where would you spend more?, and what are your next steps?

With these questions in hand and my note-taking skills primed, my first set of interviews took place in early November, 1992 in Dorchester and my last in early January in Pittsfield. *[Editor's note: The project interviewed 125 ABE and 125 ESL students overall statewide.]*

I completed more than twenty interviews with students from Dorchester, Ware, Orange, Springfield, Pittsfield and Amesbury. Some interviewees were nervous because they did not know what to expect but as word got out, more students wanted to be included. It was true for me, too; the more interviews I conducted, the more at ease with the process I became.

Before each interview I used the first few minutes to establish a comfortable level. I would ask about children and note how I had never visited their program or area of the state before. I would then read all five questions and ask where they would like to begin. Most often, we would start with the first question and proceed in order. Some interviews lasted sixty minutes while others were less than twenty.

My first interviews began in a homeless shelter for women and their children. I interviewed nine women over a three-day period. When the first student came in, I introduced myself, told her that the Department of Education was using these interviews for a report to the federal government. I told her that, since we consider students to be the experts, she was making history. I reassured her that the interview was fully confidential. I told her I would be asking five questions and that there were no right or wrong answers. This became my way of welcoming interviewees.

Having a strong follow-up program kept her involved and updated about educational opportunities. Being able to see her child at lunch made taking classes more convenient and stress-free. She liked to learn and wanted to be "somebody."

I tried to prevent my note-taking from being distracting by explaining it and then moving on with the questions.

The first interview went well and took the full sixty minutes. I gathered three pages of notes and lots of inspiration. Her responses were nearly typical of future interviews with mothers but what made her interview so special was how she expressed herself. She told me how having her child say to her in the morning, "We gotta go to school, get up!" on mornings she didn't want to go, encouraged her to earn her GED. Having a strong follow-up program kept her involved and updated about educational opportunities. Being able to see her child at lunch made taking classes more convenient and stress-free. She liked to learn and wanted to be "somebody." She set attainable goals: to attend college and become a nurse because she liked to help people.

My most memorable interview was with a student whose writing had been selected for the "Writing On the Walls" project that I coordinate. ("WOW" is a framed collection of learner-generated writings from ABE and ESL classes from across the state. The collection is displayed along the walls leading into the Bureau of Adult Education.) I was going to wait until the end of the interview to tell him I knew of his writings but in the middle of my introduction about him making history, he enthusiastically interjected," I already did. My writing was selected for Writing On the Walls!" I was so moved and surprised that I revealed my involvement with WOW. We talked a bit about his writing and then moved onto the questions.

Making that personal connection made a difference since it established a comfortable conversation level. He then eloquently and dramatically described how he felt when he could not read, "When I could not read and went into stores there was an animal inside of me [he touched his stomach]. As I learned more and more the animal slowly went away [he moved his hand slowly up his chest] and now it is gone forever [he moved his hand upward and out with a flourish]." I will never forget the image. When the interview finished he proudly read to me and showed me around his learning center.

The interview with a "WOW" author confirmed my assumptions about how to boost students' self-confidence, yet, I had had no idea how much having one's writing selected and displayed could increase one's self-confidence.

SOME CONSISTENT ANSWERS

There were some common answers to the five questions. For the question, "What brought you here?" many cited having children as motivating them to return to school so they could provide better for their families. The answer to, "What makes you stay?" is childcare. At centers with on-site childcare, parents talked of how the child could play with educational games and make friends while they studied. Students also spoke of the caring and supportive environment provided by the teachers. While childcare was especially helpful, it was clear that it was the teachers who kept the students coming everyday.

When asked, "What would make you leave?" the students would immediately respond, "Nothing," and then wonder if the school was going to be closed. I needed to assure them that I was not here to close the school. After they accepted my answer, they would most often respond that a job or getting their GED would make them leave.

The most challenging and difficult question was, "If you were in charge of the money, where would you spend more?" They either responded "I don't know," and then started talking about books, computers, better/larger facilities and childcare, or they would approach the question from a larger perspective and talk about increasing funding nationwide in the areas of education, childcare and homelessness. Few students answered the question from both points of view.

The students were fairly quick to answer "What are your next steps?" as if they had been seriously thinking about it before I asked. Most of the students planned to continue their education by going beyond their GEDs, usually at a community college. The students would often speak of their future careers and how these fit in with their education plans.

I re-read the Component Seven objective, "to determine what factors adult learners themselves identify in evaluating their goal attainment," after all my interviews were completed and it was time to write this article. I realized that the answers to "what makes you stay?" and "what are your next steps?" were most revealing because they reveal not only personal motivations but also that the student is conscious of her/his best learning environment. As one student said, "I want to learn. I like the teachers and students. I want to go as far as I can go… friends notice the difference." Learning centers that combined a strong commitment to the individual student's learning, a pressure-free environment, and challenging material kept students returning daily to classes.

"I want to learn. I like the teachers and students. I want to go as far as I can go… friends notice the difference."

Asking about next steps allowed the students to discuss their ambitions and goals. A person's realistic individual goals directly reflects the extent to which the student has been encouraged by her learning environment to recognize her/his own achievable potential. One student said it best, "I'm facing forward and taking the biggest step I can." ☑

Publication Review

This is not a test

Review by
Don Robishaw

World Education/
SABES
Boston

This is not a test. *Dehli, K., Dobbs, G., Dwyer, P., Hilton, D., Horsman, J. & Ingram, L. (1990). Toronto: East End Literacy Press.*

This kit for new readers contains many useful tools and exercises for teachers interested in implementing alternative assessment strategies in their respective Adult Literacy programs. It is also a good introduction to the novice of the various options to testing now being developed in the field by teachers.

On the other hand, the kit can also be used by the expert teacher who does not have enough time in their busy day to design their own exercises and assessment instruments. Many of the exercises included in this kit can also serve as a model to those interested in designing their own instruments.

The kit is stored in an attractive, green, 3-ring binder so that each exercise can easily be photocopied. It is also divided into seven units with several subsections:

1. **Goals**
    - *Reading*
    - *Writing*
    - *Math*
2. **Tutoring or working in groups**
    - *Working with a tutor*
    - *Working in a group*
3. **Skills**
    - *Around the house*
    - *Getting around, transportation*
    - *Shopping*
    - *Banking*
    - *Looking after children*
    - *Health*
    - *Finding a place to live*
    - *Jobs*
4. **Learning about how to learn**
    - *When, where, and what do you like to read and write*
    - *How do you learn*
    - *Thinking about what you read*
5. **Reading and writing skills**
    - *Starting to read and write*
    - *How are you doing at reading?*
    - *How are you doing at writing?*
    - *Using the alphabet*
    - *The sounds of letters*
    - *The parts of words*
    - *Punctuation*
    - *Numbers*
6. **Making changes**
    - *Are you changing?*
    - *Sharing*
    - *Actions for change*
7. **Other stuff**
    - *Further readings*
    - *Thanks*
    - *Programs and contacts*

Each unit offers a good transition into the next unit, although I am not so sure that the particular order is the one I would necessarily follow with my learners. But most teachers would not use the whole kit and probably just pick and choose those that seem to fit their learners' basic needs. For that particular purpose, I would highly recommend ***This is not a test.*** ☑

Letters

TO THE COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTER: LOOK AT YOUR STRENGTHS, TOO!

As SABES' Program Development Coordinator, I was thrilled to see Mina Reddy's article, "Program Evaluation at the Community Learning Center," in Volume 3 of *Adventures in Assessment*. The Community Learning Center's experience demonstrates much of the flavor of SABES' Integrated Program and Staff Development Process. The CLC took a systematic approach to assessing its needs and strengths, it involved staff *and* students, and it looked beyond the traditional time frame of one year.

I would like to encourage the Community Learning Center to focus more on strengths — just as it's a good place to begin with learners, it's a good place to begin with programs. The CLC addressed this only briefly, "typing up the separate action plans into one document and prefacing it with a statement of strengths that were identified in the process. Most responses to both evaluations were very positive, and this was not acknowledged anywhere in this process, which focused on needs and areas for development." In SABES' process, both individual strengths and program strengths are identified, to reflect SABES' philosophy of working from strengths, and because we are always seeking to identify and make available to everyone the extensive expertise found in ABE in Massachusetts.

More than 30 programs across the state have been trained in the Program and Staff Development Process, and each one adapts the process to suit its philosophy and needs. The Community Learning Center provided us with a good example of how the process can be modified. The Integrated Staff and Program Development Process Training will be offered in each region again soon; programs that are interested in finding out more about the training process should contact their SABES Regional Coordinators.

Barbara Garner
Program Development Coordinator
SABES

LETTER FROM URUGUAY

Ms. Loren McGrail
World Education/SABES
210 Lincoln Street
Boston, MA 02111
U.S.A.

December 9, 1992

Dear Loren:

You don't probably remember me, except for the fact that you generously gave me an issue of Adventures in Assessment in your workshop presentation about "Assessment in the Learner-directed Adult ESOL class" in the TESOL Conference in Vancouver last March.

I remember having promised you some sort of feedback and a copy of possible materials that could be generated as a result of reading your material.

Congratulations on the quality and nature of your perspectives. Your publication has given us a lot of impetus to go on exploring the assessment issues. We have benefitted from materials in the Appendix as well and several workshops have been offered having as backbones your checklist and questionnaires.

I'm sending you three papers that were prepared by teachers in the workshops I mentioned. Feel free to use them if they can be of any help to you.

Sincerely yours,

Maria Elena Perera
Pedagogical Orientator
Alianza Cultural Uruguay – Estados Unidos de America

[Editor's note: The following assessment tools focus on listening skills. We encourage readers to contribute other ESL or adult learning materials on this infrequent but rich topic.]

LISTENING PROGRESS

Vocabulary	Is the vocabulary new? Does it hinder your understanding of the whole passage?
Compensation	Is it difficult for you to guess the meaning of some of the new words?
Short Term Memory	How many times do you feel you need to listen to a new passage/conversation?
Grammar/Value of Utterances	After listening to the passage, can you briefly paraphrase it? Or while you are listening to it, can you take some notes?
Speed	Did the speakers go too fast for you to keep up with their pace? Did the speed really interfere with your understanding of the whole?
External References	Were the speakers just informing, or were they also giving opinions (implicitly)?

NOTE: These questions could be answered checking a scale (1 to 5) or checking "Not at all," "Partially," or "Almost completely."

	Not at all!				*I got it!*
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Could you follow the conversation in a successful way?					
2. Were you able to understand most of the words?					
3. How did you do it?					
a. guessing the meaning of unknown words?					
b. guessing the meaning of words you didn't hear?					
c. predicting according to the interpretation of the picture?					
d. other?					
4. How was the speed of the conversation?					
Slow					
Medium					
Medium-Fast					
Fast					

	I got it!				*Not at all!*
	5	4	3	2	1
1. Prediction helped me.					
2. I understood:					
a. the general meaning					
b. the details					
c. the purpose.					
3. Because of the speed I could understand.					
4. I could use the context to guess at unfamiliar or unheard words.					

ON PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT

Thanks for your work on ***Adventures in Assessment***. I have been working on a project for the U.S. Department of Education, Division of Adult and Vocational Education, on portfolio assessment for the past few months. In the course of this project, I've talked with people working in volunteer, adult basic education, state and federally-funded, workplace literacy, English as a Second Language, job training, grassroots community-based, public school and community college, and family literacy programs. I spoke with teachers, volunteers, staff development specialists, program administrators, and state directors. Everyone is excited about the potential of alternative and portfolio assessment, but few feel that they know how to approach it.

Leadership development in relation to alternative assessment has to be a priority; the influence of those who have been providing professional development services in this area can be clearly seen.

I talked with some people who began to implement portfolio assessment as isolated individuals because they had read about it and they were intrigued, or because they used it in their public school teaching with children. In most cases, however, I found that people experienced with portfolio assessment exist in local groups, and were introduced to portfolio assessment through some kind of organized staff development activity.

Many of those I spoke with who are engaging in portfolio assessment know of other practitioners in their local area who are also using portfolios. However, they often were surprised by my telephone call and thirsty for news of how portfolio assessment was being implemented in other parts of the country. They wanted things to read, people to talk to, and other models to look at. Many mentioned ***Adventures in Assessment*** as one of a very few things available that addresses alternative assessment in adult literacy education specifically. The literature in portfolio assessment for those who teach children is often quite applicable to adult literacy practitioners. However, it still requires some translation process, and it does not help adult literacy educators develop a sense of belonging to a larger group that is struggling with similar issues.

It is clear that we need to develop a number of mechanisms to help practitioners who are implementing portfolio and other forms of alternative assessment in adult literacy education to continue learning and to share their experiences and resources. We need materials that address alternative assessment broadly, placing portfolio assessment and other approaches within a larger theoretical framework. We need how-to's as well as conceptual explorations. We need many more publications that examine and share practitioners' experiences. We also need mechanisms such as computer bulletin boards that encourage active sharing.

Leadership development in relation to alternative assessment has to be a priority; the influence of those who have been providing professional development services in this area can be clearly seen.

All of us have to advocate for the incorporation of portfolio and other forms of alternative assessment into the indicators of program quality currently being developed in each state. *Model Indicators of Program Quality for Adult Education Programs*, released by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Adult and Vocational Education (1992), identifies portfolio assessment as a sample measure for showing educational gains (Indicator 1). However, this guide illustrates that portfolio assessment can make an important contribution to a number of other indicators as well. For example, portfolio assessment has the potential to enable practitioners' development of a much more concrete and comprehensive knowledge of students' goals, interests, and approaches to learning. This can assist in program planning (Indicator 3), curriculum and instruction (Indicator 4), staff development (Indicator 5), and retention (Indicator 8). An article on influencing state and national policy would be very useful.

And, finally we must continue working to improve professional support and working conditions in adult literacy education as a way of supporting innovation. Implementing portfolio and other forms of alternative assessment depends on using whole language, participatory approaches to instruction; instructors must feel comfortable with the teaching and learning process in order to integrate assessment with instruction. Teachers also must have paid preparation time, space in which to store folders and materials, and some job security so that the process of implementing portfolio assessment can be honored.

I know that these ideas are not new; however, I think we need to revisit them continually as we try to move forward. I appreciate your work on ***Adventures in Assessment***, and I look forward to a larger continuing conversation.

Hanna Fingeret
Executive Director, Literacy South
Durham, North Carolina

AN INVITATION TO WRITE

Adventures in Assessment accepts articles regarding any of the three components of assessment: *Getting Started, Ongoing,* and *Looking Back,* or our other departments: *What Counts?, Voices from the Field,* and *Publication Reviews.*

If you would like to submit an article to ***Adventures in Assessment,*** please contact us at:

Adventures in Assessment
Loren McGrail, editor
SABES
210 Lincoln Street
Boston, MA 02111
617-482-9485

The next issue of ***Adventures in Assessment*** will also feature readers' responses to the articles in this and earlier volumes.

Perhaps one of the articles reminded you of a classroom assessment problem you faced and/or solved. Maybe you have questions or additional information about the tools and procedures you read about. Or perhaps you just feel like conversing with other practitioners who are looking at issues of alternative assessment.

We welcome your input and feedback. To be included in the Fall ***Adventures in Assessment,*** please send your letters no later than July 1, 1993 to Loren McGrail at the above address.

SABES
System for Adult Basic Education Support

World Education
210 Lincoln Street
Boston, MA 02111

adventures in ASSESSMENT

Learner-centered approaches to assessment & evaluation in adult literacy

Volume 5

Tale of the Tools

October 1993

Funded by the Massachusetts Department of Education

325

SABES
System for Adult Basic Education Support

SABES is the System for Adult Basic Education Support, a comprehensive training and technical assistance initiative for adult literacy educators and programs. Its goal is to strengthen and enhance literacy services and thus to enable adult learners to attain literacy skills. SABES accomplishes this goal through staff and program development workshops, consultation, mini-courses, mentoring and peer coaching, and other training activities provided by five Regional Support Centers located at community colleges throughout Massachusetts.

SABES also maintains an adult literacy Clearinghouse to collect, evaluate, and disseminate ABE materials, curricula, methodologies, and program models. Each of the five SABES Regional Support Centers similarly offers program support and a lending library. SABES maintains an Adult Literacy Hotline, a statewide referral service which responds to calls from new learners and volunteers. The Hotline number is 1-800-447-8844.

The SABES Central Resource Center, located at World Education, publishes a statewide quarterly newsletter, "Bright Ideas," and journals on topics of interest to adult literacy professionals, such as this volume of "Adventures in Assessment."

The first three volumes of "Adventures in Assessment" present a comprehensive view of the state of practice in Massachusetts through articles written by adult literacy practitioners. Volume 1, Getting Started, *included start-up and intake activities. Volume* 2, Ongoing, *shares tools for ongoing assessment as part of the learning process; Volume 3,* Looking Back, Starting Again, *focused on tools and procedures used at the end of a cycle or term, including self, class, and group evaluation by both teachers and learners. Volume 4 covered a range of interests. Volume 5,* Tale of the Tools *was dedicated to reflecting on component 3 tools of alternative assessment. Volume 6,* Responding to the Dream Conference, *was dedicated to responses to Volumes 1-5. Volume 7,* The Partnership Project, *highlighted writings from a mentoring project for practitioners interested in learning about participatory assessment. Volume 8 covered a range of topics from education reform to learner involvement in assessment. Volume 9 looked at assessment in a volunteer program, native language literacy, ESOL programs, and evaluations in workplace education programs.*

We would like to see your contribution, especially if you are doing native language literacy or low-level ESOL literacy. Contact editor, Alison Simmons, to discuss your submission.

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"Adventures in Assessment" is free to DOE-funded Massachusetts programs; out-of-state requests will be charged a nominal fee, at cost. Please write to, or call:

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adventures in ASSESSMENT

Learner-centered approaches to assessment & evaluation in adult literacy

Volume 5

Editor: Loren McGrail

Assistant Editor: Rick Schwartz

October 1993

The Tale of the Tools
A Matter of Stance and Dance

Learners Logs will never be a finished product.
Gear

Examining inconsistent results, my colleagues and I reconsidered the tools .
Mueller

I am still uncertain about the best ways to document the development of self-esteem and community, but I do feel that my teacher log will play an important part.
Barry

Obviously nothing that is based on human beings' changing needs and goals is ever finished or perfect.
Kelly

I have a lot more questions than answers. In fact I am going to be revealing a lot of (gulp) mistakes , which Lord knows teachers do not really make.
Trunnell

by
Loren McGrail

Editor
SABES Central
Resource Center/
World Education

Never finished or perfect, uncertainty, inconsistent results, more questions than answers. These are just a few of the voices of reflection from the authors who participated in Component #3 of the Greater Opportunities in Adult Learners Success (G.O.A.L.S.) Project developed by Sandy Brawders for the Bureau of Adult Education and coordinated first by Lindy Whiton, then Charlotte Baer and Caroline Gear. Each of the programs involved in this project developed assessment and evaluation tools that were based on educational theories or approaches, on who their learners and teachers were and, finally, on what the goals and interests of the learners were and how they *used literacy* in their daily lives.

These reflective writings which are the focus of this volume of ***Adventures in Assessment*** are documentations of inquiry, teachers researching their practice. As Whiton says about the writings in ***Adventures in Assessment*** in general, *"This is the place where other teachers can listen not only to the '"tale of the Tools" but to the narrative, the story of who, why, and how come"* (Whiton, *Documenting the Voices,* paper delivered at AAACE, 1993).

Just as authentic assessment asks learners to develop the habit of pausing to reflect before moving on, so too must teachers adopt the practice of *"taking time to stop and think, to observe and make sense of the activities and progress of their students"* (Lessoules and Gardner, 1992). This sentiment is echoed by Stephen Brookfield when he says, *"Becoming skillfull teachers is a matter of stance and dance. It is a process that involves us taking a critically reflective stance on practice, studying our actions and reasoning about teaching as open-ended, problematic phenomena. It also engages us in a dance of experimentation and risk-taking in which we explore how learners experience learning* *while living out our pedagogical convictions and trying to realize democratic values in our practice* (Brookfield, 1993).

I want to understand the students progress. I want to see and I want the students to see the complicated reality of learning.
Trunnel

DOCUMENTING LEARNING: WHAT THE LEARNERS GET

How learners experience learning is a theme that reoccurs throughout all these teachers' stories. For Mueller in *Analyzing Self Evaluation Checklists: A Starting Point for Dialogue*, the concern is how can students take responsibility for their own learning? Her careful analysis of the data her checklists revealed about Maria and Carlotta lead her to ask *"Is it important that students move in a linear progression in their language acquisition or English usage?"* This question is of particular importance to teachers working with ESOL students who are interested in documenting acquisition, not just language learning. This question also reflects Mueller's understanding that a lack in linear progress may also indicate a significant difference in how learners perceive their own progress. *"If big gaps exist between their perceptions of their abilities and ours, then it is important to dig deeper into the 'why'."* The self-evaluation checklist then becomes the starting point for dialogue, not the end point.

For Barry, writing about and with her student Pat in *Reflections on On-going Assessment: Documenting Self-Esteem and More*, the issue of how learning is experienced was focused on how Pat felt she was making progress and how she knew when she was. Barry's main concern was that while Pat's development of self-esteem and sense of community were apparent from her accomplishments and conversations with Barry, the tools and procedures used in the program did not reflect this back to the learner. Barry's reflection is a critical looking back at what her tools both documented and revealed to her as a teacher and what they revealed or did not reveal to her student Pat.

Barry's reflection is a critical looking back at what her tools both documented and revealed to her as a teacher and what they revealed or did not reveal to her student Pat.

Barry's comment *"We need to have more frequent conversation about learning moments and more time together to analyze the data gained from these checklists"* is echoed by many authors but probably most strongly by veteran tool maker and mentor, Janet Kelly. In *A Reflection on the Ideal vs the Real* Kelly admits, *"I think we have relied more on what we as teachers thought was important to learners, what we were interested in knowing about their progress, what we thought we could document, and what we thought funders would want to know."*

She goes on to say that these beliefs still form the basis of choices in assessment practices but that she hopes the program will find ways *"to invite learners to share more effectively in decisions not only about program and curriculum evaluation but also in the selection of and critique of materials for their own assessment portfolios."*

Like Barry, Kelly's reflection piece also examines and critiques previously published tools at the Read/Write/Now Program and discusses the development of new tools. Of particular note is the discarding of learning logs (a tool much favored in Barry's program) in favor of a shared teacher's log where *"Significant anecdotes and observations could be recorded on a joint teacher/learner from each learning contract period or month."* Kelly's experience, like Barry's, reminds us that what seems to work best is time and trust. *"The longer learners are part of the learning center community, the better they get at telling us what works for them, what does not, what they like and do not like and why"*

Trunnel, in *Danger: Road Construction Ahead*, like Barry and Kelly, is also concerned with how the learners experience the tools he has created. *"If you asked them about these tools, they would likely have much different responses and potentially much different assumptions about what should be assessed and what indicators they need."* Similarly he finds the teacher log to be an invaluable tool that records more completely the emotional and highly complicated task that learning is beyond skill acquisition. His use of the teacher log demonstrates one of the key principles of learner-centered assessment — assessment must feed back to instruction. Trunnel suggests that the notes he keeps are also for his own improvement, what strategies he has used, what has worked, what has not. He even suggests, "Perhaps there is a way it can be used too in teacher-sharing at my center or in a teacher self-evaluation." Critical self reflection is a hallmark of all these reflective writings, however Trunnel stands alone in his ability to see and then identify the different kinds of checklists, *"The checklists that I use are skills based, not strategy based, and thus do not record all the information I want."*

His use of the teacher log demonstrates one of the key principles of learner-centered assessment — assessment must feed back to instruction.

Like Trunnel, Gear in writing about *The Learning Log: Evolution of an Assessment Tool* was interested in how to create a tool that recorded information that was useful to the teacher and the student alike. Her needs and questions are different but just as important: *"How can we get students to look at their own learning? How can we see their learning as a process and evaluation of their progress as part of the process? How can we get the students to measure their own progress rather than rely solely on the instructor? How can we get our students to answer the weekly evaluation questions with more than one sentence? How can we get our students to critique the classes and know it isn't going to be taken as an insult to the instructor?*

Revising tools was a similar concern for Oesch. In *Adapting Tools To A New Program*, Oesch describes how tools designed for one program were revised or adapted to another at the same agency. Some of you familiar with Martha Germanoski's article, in the first issue of ***Adventures in Assessment***, will recall her goals checklist and the daily log. These tools have been adapted and revised to assist learners in taking responsibility for their learning, not fix the learner but help the learner build on his/her strengths. Oesch also states that the revision in the EGAP (Educational Goals Assessment Package) led to changes in the curriculum. This is a good example of how a change in the assessment "tail" can wag the curriculum "dog."

DOCUMENTING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

For Judy Hofer and Pat Larson in *Reflecting on the Links Between Literacy Practices and Community Development*, the issue of building on learner strengths is a collective endeavor. *"We want to set forth right from the start that people coming to an adult education program must take an active role in their own learning, and that working within a group will enhance that process… Getting a GED and improving reading and writing skills barely scratch the surface of what is needed for people to get out of poverty and exercise more control over their lives."* Hofer and Larson are concerned with bringing the larger community into the classroom and the classroom to the larger community and how to create tools that measure not only individual progress but how to assess what people do as a group/community. They have benefited and borrowed from Sondra Stein's *Framework for Assessing Program Quality* designed for community-based programs for the Association for Community-based Education. This framework and a view of literacy as practice helped them to generate a list of guiding questions that guided their inquiry. Some of the questions are as follows: *How do we assess improvement and change as a continuous process not only for the individual but for the community of individuals? How do we assess if there is movement or change on a continuum in terms of community development by people participating in programs and by the program? How do we develop a language of assessment which takes into account the development of community and collaborative efforts at adult education centers which also speaks to the needs of funders?*

THE STANCE AND THE DANCE

Becoming skillful teachers in learner-centered approaches to assessment is a matter of stance and dance. It is a process that requires us to take a reflective stance on our practice (both past and present), to be clear about what we stand for or are trying to achieve, yet to pose questions rather than seek simple solutions, to be open to engage in a dance of experimentation and revision, and finally to risk finding out not just how our learners experience learning but how we help or fail them in that process. The G.O.A.L.S. Project allowed a handful of practitioners in the state of Massachusetts the resources, time, and money to carefully map their route and compare their travels. The toolkit, according to Trunnel, is the "Atlas, that we hope will help others explore other roads and paths." To make the trip a little smoother, we have included these reflective writings as a kind of legend to understanding why some roads are paved while others are still dirt roads.

Becoming skillful teachers in learner-centered approaches to assessment is a matter of stance and dance. It is a process that requires us to take a reflective stance on our practice (both past and present), to be clear about what we stand for or are trying to achieve, yet to pose questions rather than seek simple solutions.

As editor of ***Adventures in Assessment,*** I invite you all to contribute your reflections or reactions so that we may learn from each other, discover new roads together. ☑

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The Alternative Assessment Aspect of the G.O.A.L.S. Project

The Process of Component #3

by
Lindy Whiton

Western Mass. SABES;
former Coordinator,
Component #3

This issue of ***Adventures in Assessment*** is dedicated to discussing the process a group of teachers involved in alternative assessment went through over the past year. The group that put together the articles contained here were originally drawn together to complete part of the Greater Opportunities in Adult Learners Success (G.O.A.L.S) Project.

The original intention of the G.O.A.L.S. Project, which was developed by Sandy Brawders for the Bureau of Adult Education, was to investigate and develop an accountability system which would be a true reflection of the field, one that intrinsically asks teachers, directors and learners their opinion on "What are ya doin'? What would be helpful? When are you having problems? How do you make changes? Did you discover anything new this year that you would like to share?"

The G.O.A.L.S. Team interviewed the staff of more than 70 programs. We talked to both teachers and directors. We interviewed 250 learners, both ABE and ESL (see ***Adventures in Assessment***, Vol. 1). We asked the field to be a part of a discovery process. Although this project has come from the Bureau of Adult Education and not the field, it has adopted several different techniques to get at the language the field uses, to get at the needs of the field, to find a true reflection and voice of the field.

Although the original intention of gathering this group together was not for staff development nor as a teacher research project, it has been both. What resulted was both good staff development and a form of teacher research.

THE ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT ASPECT OF G.O.A.L.S.

The objectives of the G.O.A.L.S. project were as follows:

- Have an accountability system that reflects the **entire** field;
- Provide an opportunity for all voices to be heard;
- Give individuals an opportunity to impact on state policy making;
- Develop a learner-centered accountability system[1];
- Look for an organic language of evaluation that is accessible to the learner, not 'secret knowledge' only decipherable to bureaucrats;
- Be able to pay for what it asks;
- Create an appropriate framework, rather than rely on already-existing frameworks that may be inadequate;

This project assumes a staff development network and system in place where there is support for change (training) in the field (SABES).

Component #3 is the section of the G.O.A.L.S. project that looks at alternative means of assessment. The Department of Education chose to run this component as a teacher-based research project to develop a state run accountability system, one that would foster a dialogue with adult learners, teachers, and other staff, legislature, the federal government and the public at large.

The questions that were important to us throughout the entire project were:

- What must the Bureau know in order to fund successful programs?
- How does the Bureau open lines between programs and the Bureau so that learners benefit from everyone's expertise?
- What do the programs need from the Bureau to best do their jobs?
- Can we develop a system of accountability that truly represents the variety and richness of programs, thus reflecting the variety and richness of learners?
- In Component #3, can we develop a document that similarly represents our variations and that allows for one piece of the puzzle to be placed, so that when we step back and look at all the components as a whole, alternative assessment is clear and helpful?

The majority of the participating programs already had in place curricula that reflected the principles of alternative assessment, and were attempting to develop tools to inform teachers and learners as to the effect of these curricula. (See ***Adventures in Assessment***, Volume #4 - Whiton and McGrail.) This group believed learners' goals were not only important but a driving force in curriculum, thus, these assessment practice are based on the individual goals of the learner as well as the goals of the individual programs. Whether we are teaching ABE, GED, or ESL literacy practices have to directly relate not only to the goals of learners, but to their immediate lives as well. Our beliefs are backed by the works of Lytle (1989, 1990), Auerbach (1990), Spruck Wrigley (1992) and Fingeret (1989). To discuss learners' growth by talking about standardized increases in reading levels "ignores other legitimate criteria for evaluating a literacy program, like the quality of the curriculum, teaching, or its connection to significant social issues relevant to students' lives and interests; and, it fails to recognize that increases in reading scores have little to do with the way adults live and use literacy in the real world" (McGrail 1991). And with ESL literacy students, standardized assessments "fail to distinguish between language, literacy, and culture; that is, they don't tell us whether the learner has trouble with an item because he or she (a) is unfamiliar with the cultural notion underlying the task (b) lacks the requisite knowledge of English vocabulary or sentence structure or (c) does not have enough experience with reading and writing to complete the task" (Spruck Wrigley, 1992).

Look for an organic language of evaluation that is accessible to the learner, not 'secret knowledge' only decipherable to bureaucrats

> *Reading assessment must reflect recent advances in the understanding of reading process. The* ***International Reading Association*** *is concerned that instructional decisions are too often made from assessments which define reading as a sequence of discrete skills that students must master to become readers. Such assessments foster inappropriate instruction.*[2]

Thus, based on the educational theories that drive the program's curriculum, each of the programs involved in this project developed assessment/evaluation tools that consider who their

It was fascinating to see the variety of tools. Even more impressive were the variations on the same tools. Teachers had adapted models to make tools that were appropriate for their sites and needs.

learners and teachers are, the goals and interests of their learners, and how they used literacy in their daily lives.

The development of a community of learners is an extremely important factor in the success of learners' reaching their goals and our curricula and our assessments/evaluation tools need to reflect this, too. These practices inspire and cultivate community involvement and ownership of educational decisions in the classroom.

The articles that follow reflect the hard work of these programs. They combined what they knew about alternative assessment with the needs of the Bureau, and the needs of other programs. These articles, or notebooks, are the product of the process that Component #3 went through while wrestling with the issues of accountability, assessment, and evaluation. They don't say, "Here, just duplicate and standardize these tools." Rather, they relate the process they went through in developing the tools to help other practitioners develop their own tools based on their own curricula, learners, and classrooms.

THE PROCESS OF ASSESSING ASSESSMENT

The first meeting was in April, 1992. We introduced ourselves, then immediately sat down to the task of defining assessment and evaluation. First, we attempted to get the entire group to settle on one definition of assessment and one of evaluation. We could not. We agreed to disagree. (Since then, we have reached agreement.)

At the end of the first meeting, we decided the goal of the next meeting would be to share the tools the group's members had already developed and to describe our programs to each other. This was done in early June, 1992. It was fascinating to see the variety of tools. Even more impressive were the variations on the same tools.[4] Teachers had adapted models to make tools that were appropriate for their sites and needs. By the end of our sharing, we knew we needed some format to bring us all together. I was then asked to write a philosophical statement and some ideas for direction, distribute this paper to everyone, and then call us back together. At this point I developed the chart (Figure 1) adapted from Rena Sofer's work (Sofer, Rena, *Complete Theory-to-Practice Handbook*). It lists all the different types of tools that had been adopted by the programs and fits them into a framework that addresses accountability issues. The paper also divides tools into the categories "Starting Up," "On-Going," and "Looking Back" (Auerbach, McGrail, ***Adventures in Assessment***, Volume 1).

At our next meeting, we decided to split up into groups that represented these three categories. These groups would develop a tool kit including examples of tools in each category and describe when, why, how, and who might use these tools. This discussion raised the question of what the tool kit had to do with accountability. Could the tool kit gather the type of information that DOE was requesting? It was felt that for the majority of these programs, reading levels, acquiring a job, or entering college were not the only outcomes nor were they the only measures of success. Actually, in terms of reading levels, we thought just the opposite, that to talk about reading levels was irrelevant to literacy programs. The types of measures we felt were important were not addressed by either state or federal reports.

The teachers wanted to talk about changes in attitudes or smiles, involvement with school systems, or finding a home. Where was the mechanism to talk about community involvement, or the changes in empowerment, or the willingness to believe you can make a change as a measurement of success for programs? These measures do not fit neatly onto a linear chart that denotes increase in something. For most of these programs, linear charts contained the information they believed the Commonwealth wanted and that contradicted what they believed was their mission. At this meeting the "Looking Back Group" decided to tackle the task of discussing the larger community changes within their category and create a fourth group. (This discussion is reflected in the articles.)

For the next several months, people met in their smaller groups and attempted to visit each other's programs. In early October, we regrouped, gave updates and began the topic of Quality Indicators, sharing a copy of the Federal indicators and a copy of the indicators developed at ACBE by Sondra Stein and Susan Rosenblum. We decided to read all the articles and return in November to put together recommendations from the Massachusetts quality indicators.

At the November meeting, we struggled with what we saw as the real issue, namely that the concept of accountability needed to be changed from a hierarchical linear concept to a more cyclical concept. One suggestion was that programs needed to be better apprised of the needs of the State DOE and how they were accountable to the Federal DOE so they understood the Bureau's constraints. Although the group felt it was difficult to improve the ACBE job, the teachers did establish a list of recommendations and also generated proposals for an accountability system that would reflect those quality indicators.

Where was the mechanism to talk about community involvement, or the changes in empowerment, or the willingness to believe you can make a change as a measurement of success for programs?

After our November meeting, there was a long break until February. We decided to finish the "Notebooks" and to create documentation about the notebooks for others in the field, and to document some changes that individuals have gone through. It was at this point of the process that I went on to a new job, leaving the group to write up their experiences and their feelings.

THE FRUITS OF OUR LABOR

This work was used to develop the indicators for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. These teachers' articles and the Alternative Assessment Notebooks reveal all the earmarks of quality staff development. The process:

- Networked teachers together across disciplines, programs, and the state;
- Provided a chance to share materials, methodology and ideas for further programming;
- Gave an opportunity to discuss issues at a time in our profession when we rarely have time to stop and reflect upon any form of assessment;
- Enabled them to read other people's work (including but not limited to Lytle, Fingeret, and Stein), and
- Allowed them to begin to document their ideas.

Much attention has been given to the use of teacher inquiry groups as good staff development. Lytle and Cochran-Smith argue it is a "way to generate both 'local knowledge' and 'public knowledge' about teaching; that is, knowledge developed and used by teachers for themselves and their immediate communities, as well as knowledge useful to a larger community" (1992). So, even though the original intention may not have been to create a successful staff development experience, it was a natural by-product of the experience.

Even though the original intention may not have been to create a successful staff development experience, it was a natural by-product of the experience.

Because of the different perspectives of the teachers, it was similar to a multi-level classroom. However, all of the teachers had years of experience from which to draw. Sometimes it was difficult to balance the task of looking at the issue of accountability and what the Bureau had hired me to do and to engage in this staff development activity.

As I have said previously, I found this experience to be very similar to the process of inquiry and to the process of staff development. The clearest proof is that the practitioners who came into this component in April of 1992 claiming they had no tools in place, but were really interested in learning, are the ones with the most energy to see this group continue. They are the ones committing themselves for another year. Those practitioners who had already given the topic a lot of thought and creation seem to be interested in moving to another topic. It is the sign of good staff development when there is excitement remaining in those who still feel they have something to gain from the experience.

As for an accountability system, I believe the point of all this work is to show that accountability cannot rest on the learner's achievements. Comparing learners does not make a program accountable. The idea is to work with the program, inclusive of the learner, to create quality programs. Those indicators of quality programs that are agreed upon should be measured by program development and not by looking at standardized reading scores. Component #3 has helped to better define the roles of assessment evaluation and accountability, and it is important for us to stop using those words synonymous and interchangeable. We must be accountable to our own knowledge and not give in for the sake of convenience.

Footnotes

[1] Public policy is usually created by administrative and governmental offices and then individuals are asked to be responsible and implement that policy. This project is attempting to get around making that mistake and systematically and intentionally asked for individual and group input.

[2] International Reading Association. (1988). Resolution on reading assessment. Newark, DE: Author.

[3] A method of training which causes participants to first define for themselves a concept and then, by joining with more and more people, have to agree upon a definition with a group.

[4] Examples of the types of tools can be found in Adventures in Assessment, Volume 3, article by Eileen Barry.

FIGURE I*

Assessment Tools	Cognitive Processes and Affective Factors	How to Administer	Possible Scoring	How results are determined	Uses	When to Administer
Reading Behavior (I.R.I.)	Reading interests reading strategies	Individualized student reads to teacher	Percentage graph (informal Miscue Analysis)	Percentage of types of miscues and comprehension score	Determination of strengths and weaknesses in reading	Intake on-going
Reading Behavior (Questionnaire)	Reading interests Reading strategies Reading attitudes	Either individually or in groups of peers	No Score. Teachers understanding of students' interpretations	Answers to questions determine students' understanding of print for teachers	Determination of strengths and weaknesses and understanding in reading	On-going
Writing Assessment Conference & Folder	Writing interests Writing strategies Technical skills Writing attitudes	Teacher and student meet together to conference	Not applicable	Results are clear by viewing development of writing strategies	Conferences allow for individualized writing process	On-going
Writing Assessment Portfolio	Writing strategies and development of technical skills	Students choose writing samples and place in portfolio to be viewed	Holistic scoring is possible	Teacher can either use holistic numerical scoring or give qualitative feedback	Concrete examples which students chose to indicate growth	On-going
Program Magazine and Books Published	Creation of concrete product	Develop program policy for choosing finished student works for publishing	n/a	n/a	Published pieces can be seen as final product and used for evaluation	Looking back
Spelling & Vocabulary Graphs	Spelling, word meaning word recognition	Individually with instructor	Graph	Number correct out of 10	Understand growth in spelling	On-going
Anecdotal Records (students)	Learner generated	Either from form or retrieve from journal entries	n/a	n/a	Develop curriculum and program policy	Looking back
Anecdotal Records (teachers)	Teacher generated	Either from form or retrieve from journal entries	n/a	n/a	Develop curriculum and program policy	Looking back
Classroom Evaluations (students)	Learner generated	Handout questionnaire end of whatever cycle that needs to be evaluated	n/a	n/a	To inform teachers. To create change in curriculum or methodologies	Looking back
Program Evaluations (teachers & students)	Learner generated	Handout questionnaire end of whatever cycle cycle that needs to be evaluated.	n/a		To inform. To create change or validate present policies or curriculum.	Looking back On-going
Books Read (form)	Teacher generated	Students could have their own forms in portfolios	n/a	Concrete evidence of not only how many books read but which books, i.e. topics	Concrete information for both student and teacher	On-going Looking back
Attendance	Learner generated	Daily logs or sign-in sheets	numerical	counting	Quantitative information or profile information	On-going
Graduation	Learner generated	SELF EXPLANATORY	SELF EXPLANATORY	SELF EXPLANATORY		Looking back

*This is the original version of the toolkit. The latest version was not available at time of publication.

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Assessment Practices & Tools at Read/Write/Now

A Reflection on the Ideal vs. the Real

by
Janet Kelly

Read/Write/Now
Springfield

"Reflection" may be too serene and contemplative a word for what I'm going to do in this piece and definitely for the place I'm doing it from. There is traffic whizzing by outside my sunporch as I write, cats walking over my paper, and the constant awareness of my baby son's sleeping presence in the next room. Is he *really* sleeping? Did that last truck's passing wake him?

I'm struck by how like my program's one room environment this distraction-packed home space is, at least when there are no classes in action. In the program space the distractions are endless phone calls, visitors, various staff people coming and going, learners coming to visit or check out books, daily details, and unforeseen crises that are all part of life in a learning center.

Yet, despite the distractions, reflection and review of assessment practices and tools still happen. They have become a part of what we see as necessary to make our curriculum as responsive as possible to learners' goals and needs. I would like to be able to say they had a more central, deliberate place in the work of our program, but because of our small budget and resulting shortage of staff hours, much of the work of assessment is fit into too little time around the edges of classes and preparation of materials. In principle it is central, in practice it doesn't get enough time yet.

We are working on it. We have a one-year writing and publishing grant that allows teachers some more hours. At least this year we have the possibility of making the real more like the ideal in terms of better integrating assessment into curriculum and program development.

Another goal for this year is to make our assessment process and tools more responsive to the needs of learners. We are beginning to hear what learners have to tell us about the kinds of assessment tools we use and the way we use them. I think we have relied more on what we as teachers thought was important to learners, what we were interested in knowing about their progress, what we thought we could document, and what we thought funders would want to know. These beliefs still form the basis of our choices in assessment practices, but I hope we will find ways to invite learners to share more effectively in decisions not only about program and curriculum evaluation, which they currently do, but also in the selection of and critique of materials for their own assessment portfolios.

RETHINKING TOOLS AND PRACTICES

After the first two volumes of ***Adventures in Assessment*** came out, I began to rethink some of the choices of tools and practices I'd included with the articles about Read/Write/Now. That's partly because of the nature of this kind of assessment as well as the nature of writing and publishing. Obviously, nothing that's based on human beings' changing needs and goals is ever finished or perfect. Our needs and goals are continually changing and new information or a new perspective on an old practice requires making revisions in what was "perfect" for last year, or yesterday. Many forms designed to fit a perceived need in assessment have seemed perfect until they were put to practical use. Then the revisions needed become obvious. Also, sharing or publishing anything I've put in writing, whether it's a grant proposal or a poem, is one sure-fire way of seeing it with new eyes, sometimes through the responses of readers and sometimes through being able to stand back far enough to see it in a new way. This is one of the great things about this journal — learning from what other people are doing by reading articles and talking to people and learning more about what we are doing by writing about it.

It's also been interesting to hear about ways other programs have adapted things we use; this has helped us see our own practices in a new light, too. The journal has helped expand our collaborative style of working together to include other teachers in other programs. Our own program has expanded to include a family literacy program funded by Even Start, which is a collaboration with the Springfield School Department. The Even Start staff have brought new ideas and a family literacy perspective to portfolio assessment, which has been a positive addition to our overall assessment process.

WHAT'S IN A R/W/N PORTFOLIO NOW?

GOAL SETTING:

initial screening & placement interview, including responses to teacher-made reading comprehension exercise, various leveled reading samples if needed, and Slosson score
goals checklist
learning contract

READING:

list of books read
reading conference record
reading conference checklist
reading progress checklist
beginning readers progress checklist
samples of beginning readers language experience stories
reading miscue analysis results
reading response journals, student individual reading records, self-evaluation of reading responses

WRITING:

first writing sample
dialogue journal samples
other dated writing samples
writing conference record
writing progress checklist
published writings

OTHER:

learner's self-evaluation forms
math activities record
computer activities logs - various programs
teacher' logs (anecdotes & observations - kept in separate notebook)
evidence of learning/progress significant to learners - copy of driver's license earned, letters sent to newspapers, representatives, etc.

Janet Kelly, Read/Write/Now
9/20/93

Our needs and goals are continually changing and new information or a new perspective on an old practice requires making revisions in what was "perfect" for last year, or yesterday.

CHANGES IN THE READ/WRITE/ NOW PORTFOLIO

What's in a portfolio at Read/Write/Now these days and how it differs from what was in a portfolio two years ago is something I'd like think about on paper. Looking at the summary that was included in the November '91 issue of *Adventures*. I see things we've kept doing and things we've let go due to lack or relevance or time.

In the category of "Goal Setting", we continue to use an extensive interview in our initial screening with a placement "test" that includes a teacher-made reading comprehension sample, the Slosson Oral Reading Test to evaluate word recognition and decoding skills, and a writing sample. The Even Start adult education staff used the Fry readability scale to level various passages of writing by adult learners and created questions to assess comprehension for more definitive placement of learners.

The Read/Write/Now Screening & Placement Interview as published in ***Adventures*** *is an example of a tool that seemed to address a perceived need, but didn't work in the real situation at all.*

The Read/Write/Now Screening & Placement Interview as published in Vol. 1 of *Adventures* is an example of a tool that seemed to address a perceived need, but didn't work in the real situation at all. On the final page I had put in a statement/question about drugs and alcohol use that I thought would clarify a previously unstated and murky policy. It was to be read and signed by both interviewers and interviewees. The first time I tried to use it I found that I couldn't; the first face-to-face meeting with a prospective learner didn't feel right for dealing with this issue. Things sometimes look so appealing on paper but make no sense in practice. So that part of the form was eliminated.

Our Goals Checklist has stayed about the same for a couple of years, with only minor revisions. The Even Start team used it as a basis for designing a family literacy goals checklist, and added a feature of choosing short and long term goals. Learning Contracts are still vital pieces of our program and assessment process. We have seen a lot of growth in both learners' and teachers' ability to use this tool to name and reach goals. We've all gotten better at being more realistic and organized about arriving at workable goals and breaking them into understandable steps. New staff are helped in this by seasoned learners and staff and new learners are helped in the same way. Knowing our limits without limiting ourselves too much is one of the great balancing acts of adult life, it seems. We're always working on that one.

One change we've made in relation to Learning Contracts is setting aside time for individual learning contract conferences at the beginning of each class cycle instead of trying to do lengthy conferences during regular class time. This has helped us to really hear each person, find out what they need and want to do, and also helps determine how committed a learner is who we have questions about from past history. Sometimes a contract review session includes an update and slight revision of a learner's goals rather than a whole new set of goals.

Often, the review shows a progression from one set of goals to a logical next set. James M., who accomplished his long-term goal of attaining a Commercial Driver's License after his 20 year factory job ended when the factory closed, got a job driving a bus this summer. His goals for this fall include improving his map reading skills.

Some of the tools for reading and writing assessment are still used as described in Vols. 1 & 2 of *Adventures* while others have faded away from disuse, been purposefully retired, or are used differently now. We still use learners' book lists and reading conference records as tools for ongoing assessment. In addition, Marilyn Antonucci, a Read/Write/Now teacher who is now a part of the Even Start team, developed another form, the Reading Conference Checklist, which provides a framework for seasoned staff to do a more comprehensive reading conference or helps new staff and substitutes understand what's involved in an individual reading conference. This form is used as needed throughout cycles.

The Reading Progress Checklist is still used to record development of reading strategies of all but beginning level readers. The comments section has become a place to summarize reading progress as observed by teachers. A Beginning Readers Progress Checklist was developed by Marilyn Antonucci to assess the development of reading behaviors and strategies by learners in the "0 - 1.9" reading level category. These learners' portfolios also include samples of their language experience stories and cloze activities. Two tools that have faded away are "Looking At Your Own Reading Behavior" and the modified Burke Reading Interview. They may be used in reading groups as a stimulus for discussion about the reading process, especially in a group of learners new to the program.

Reading Miscue Analysis continues to be an important component of our reading assessment, but routine detailed miscue analysis with all learners for whom it is appropriate is still a goal rather than a reality. The biggest barrier to frequent, comprehensive miscue analysis has been too few staff to schedule the uninterrupted time needed with learners to do the miscue inventory and analysis afterwards. We also need more staff development time to practice doing miscues so that more than one or two teachers are comfortable doing it.

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Reading Response Journals have also been added to some learners' portfolios. Readers who have gotten involved in writing responses to their independent reading have chosen to use another one-page form to periodically evaluate their own written response. This encourages the development of critical reflection of reading and validates the active aspect of the reading process — what the reader brings to the text and what meaning he/she makes of it.

Writing assessment still consists of a first writing sample, dialogue journal samples, other dated writing samples and published writings. We have aimed for, but not completely routinized, learners and teachers deciding together about what goes into portfolios. We need to add a simple statement about who picked which piece and why. We know this at the time and think we're going to remember, but sometimes it gets lost along the way. The Writing Progress Checklist has been substantially revised to reflect the kind of analysis of learners' writing we really do and have time for. The form is used twice in a cycle and compared. The Writing Conference Record kept in each learner's writing folder has been revised slightly to encourage recording any writing activity, rather than just "skills worked on". Several teachers have found it useful to keep more involved logs of where learners are in their writing, but these notes don't find their way into the portfolios.

LEARNING LOGS A FAVORITE, BUT DISCARDED FOR NOW

A poet/teacher once said his favorite line in a poem is the one that needed to be thrown out to make the poem work. Learning logs were like that favorite line for me. I was very attached to the idea, partly because I did something like them in an alternative education class in high school and loved it. However, nobody else liked them, learners or staff, so they were thrown out. I keep hoping to devise some variation on the logs that will mean more to people. The format used the same four statements to elicit learners' comments on their own learning in and out of the program on a weekly basis. Many learners gave rote answers, often using the previous week's log as a pattern. Most people felt it was something they were doing for teachers, not for themselves. Although some people did start to use the logs to reflect on their learning and let us know about things they liked and didn't like, most people never seemed to feel ownership of the logs. We've considered using one different question each week, but we haven't tried it yet. Meantime there is always a lot of talk about learning, about what works and doesn't, but learners are not necessarily putting it into writing. This kind of talk often finds its way into dialogue journals.

A poet/teacher once said his favorite line in a poem is the one that needed to be thrown out to make the poem work. Learning logs were like that favorite line for me.

We continue to use a revised form of the Teacher's Log for Observations & Reflections and find it very helpful. One challenge is finding a way to make significant entries in the logs part of learners' portfolios. The logs are primarily used for teachers to reflect on how particular learners are doing, document evidence of literacy learning and growth in self-esteem, and make note of interests and needs to follow up on. Significant anecdotes and observations could be recorded on a joint teacher/learner form each learning contract period or month. This would give definite shape to teachers sharing their observations with learners and act as another forum for learners to tell teachers what they have observed about their own learning. (I hear the Read/Write/Now staff saying: "Somebody stop her before she creates another form!")

Learners' self-evaluation forms, which include some program evaluation, are revised as needed by staff every cycle. It would probably be very useful to ask learners to help us devise a better way to elicit critical responses to questions about program design and effectiveness. What seems to work best is time and trust. The longer learners are part of the learning center community, the better they get at telling us what works for them, what doesn't, what they like and don't like and *why*.

SOME TIME TO THINK, PLEASE

If I won the lottery and could start an endowment fund for Read/Write/Now so that shortages did not exist, one thing

I'd do (after making all staff full time with benefits, adding more classes, and having windows put in our room) is hire a clerical person to help us maintain the organization. This mythical person could also answer the phone and do other essential work that would allow teachers and myself to spend more time on making the real assessment process and tools a little more like the ideal ones we keep striving for.

One thing I have recognized in these few years of being involved in alternative assessment is that we can't go back. Standardized tests alone would never capture the range and richness of literacy learning, personal and social growth, awareness and involvement in community life and issues, and that overused but apt work, 'empowerment' that happens in the lives of adult learners. Tests alone could not show these things in ways authentic enough to satisfy either learners' or teachers' need to know. So, lottery or no lottery, we are committed to this process of continual rethinking, reflecting, streamlining, expanding, and revising assessment tools and the ways we use them.

☑

One thing I have recognized in these few years of being involved in alternative assessment is that we can't go back.

READING CONFERENCE CHECKLIST

WHAT: teacher's checklist to organize information from an individual reading conference with developing and more advanced readers

WHY: helps teacher categorize and analyze information from conferences, as well as remind her/him which areas to pay attention to in reading conferences

HOW: on an individual basis, as needed

WHEN: especially helpful when a teacher is new to reading conferences; done throughout the class cycle, although not necessarily with every reading conference.

Name of Student ___ ____________________ Date ________________

Name of book ________________________ Approximate level ________

How well did student enjoy this book: Very Well Some Not Very Well

Appropriateness of this selection: Good Too Easy Too Hard

I. Comprehension: General Understanding of book: ☐ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Poor

1. Retelling Very Good Good Fair Poor
   - ☐ Unaided recall
   - ☐ Accuracy of recall
   - ☐ Recall when asked questions

2. Recognition of:
   - ☐ Character identification
   - ☐ Character descriptions
   - ☐ Events in succession
   - ☐ Plot summary

II. Oral Reading: Fluency:

Rate: ☐ Good ☐ Too Slow ☐ Too Fast

- ☐ Word-by-word reading
- ☐ Poor phrasing
- ☐ Lacks good sight vocabulary
- ☐ Reversals: letter/word/phrase
- ☐ Gross mispronunciations
- ☐ Substitutions
- ☐ Self corrects
- ☐ Ignores punctuations
- ☐ Repetitions: word/phrases
- ☐ Omissions: sounds/words
- ☐ Additions: sounds/words
- ☐ Confuses similar-looking words
- ☐ Loses place frequently

- ☐ Responds to unknown words by:

III. Word Recognition: General accuracy of word perception: Good Fair Poor

Needs help in:
- ☐ Context clues
  - Syntactic context clues: signals provided by word endings, function words and word order
  - Semantic context clues: meaningful relations among words
- ☐ Configuration clues: the shape of the word
- ☐ Phonemic analysis: knowledge of wrods or word parts (e.g. window and sill=windowsill)
- ☐ Structural analysis: knowledge of affixes and bases of words
- ☐ Accurate, rapid word recognition

Summary:

Recommendations:

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SELF EVALUATION OF READING RESPONSES

WHAT: learner's form to use to reflect on own reading responses in response journals

WHY: gives more advanced readers an opportunity to look back at and value the growth and variety of their responses to reading they have had over a period of time

HOW: learner looks over response journal of a period of time (6-8 weeks) and then uses the form to reflect critically on the responses and the process

WHEN: intermittently, throughout the class cycle.

A response journal is a notebook or folder in which students record their own personal reactions to, questions about, and reflections on a book they are reading with a group or independently. A response can also be about a TV show, a movie, a meeting, or a family event, that was meaningful to the student.

The student is developing awareness of, and eventually commitment to, their own learning processes necessary to help them develop effective reading strategies.

The Response Journal is read by the teacher and, because it is "personal" writing, it is not marked for mechanical acuracy or stylistic features. A reply to the student is not necessary in the journal itself.

Name of Student ______________________________ Date ____________________

Evaluation period from ____________ to ________________

1. With which response are you most satisfied?
Why?

2. With which response are you most dissatisfied?
Why?

3. What can you do to try to make your responses more satisfying?

BEGINNING READER PROGRESS CHECKLIST

WHAT: teacher's comprehensive checklist for assessment of individual beginning reader's reading behavior and development over a period of class cycle

WHY: to organize and categorize reading assessment information in an accessible format to help teachers plan activities for individuals and reading groups as well as to document learner's progress in the beginning stages of reading development

HOW: teacher looks over logs and reflects on learner's reading behavior in class, individual and group work with reader, learner's self-assessment and reporting of reading behavior outside of class and complete checklist

WHEN: towards end of learning cycles

(adapted and expanded by Janet Kelly from Sylvia Greene's Writing & Spelling Progress Sheet, from "Basic Literacy Kit" (1989)

Reader: ______________________ Teacher ______________________ Date: ________________

	Consistently Evident	Sometimes Evident	Not Yet Evident
I: Gaining confidence in self as potential readers			
1. Follows the sequence of events in a story			
2. Expects words to make sense			
3. Uses directional conventions			
3a. Follows print in left to right direction			
3b. Goes to next line (left again on line below)			
4. Understands that for every spoken word, there is a written one (one-to-one correspondence)			
5. Understands that the shape of a written word remains constant			
6. Learning to use the following cues:			
6a. Picture cues			
6b. Semantic cues (what makes sense)			
6c. Syntactic cues (what sounds like language) Expects text to follow accepted speech patterns			
6d. Graphophonic cues			
6d1. Developing a sight vocabulary			
6d2. Reading words form own vocabulary			
6d3. Reading words from reading materials (LEA and reading texts)			

Consistently Sometimes Not Yet

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	Consistently Evident	Sometimes Evident	Not Yet Evident
7. Developing concepts about print:			
7a. Identifies alphabet letters			
7b. Prints letters (manuscripts form)			
7c. Writes letters (cursive form)			
7d. Recognizes punctuation marks:			
7d1. period			
7d2. comma			
7d3. question mark			
7d4. exclamation mark			
7d5 quotation marks			
7e. Understands spacing between words			
7f. Understands one-to-one word matching			
7g. Building awareness of shapes of words			
7h. Building awareness of length of words			
8. Letter/sound responses (identifies sounds):			
8a. Initial consonants			
8b. Consonant clusters			
8c. Short vowel sounds			
8d. Long vowel sounds			
8e. Double vowel sounds			
8f. Makes simple substitution of initial consonants			
9. Word analysis			
9a. Sees the endings on words, -s, ed, ing			
9b. Sees compound words			
10. Developing a pattern of strategies for getting meaning from words			
10a. Predicts which word makes sense			
10b. Understands oral cloze activities			
10c. Confirms if word does make sense			
10d. Initiates a new word which does make sense			

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	Consistently Evident	Sometimes Evident	Not Yet Evident
II. Involvement in Writing			
1. Participates in Shared Reading			
1a. Reads daily news story (teacher/learner generated)			
1b. Reads text of stories from Big Books (teacher made materials/commercial)			
2. Developing reading skills by Shared Reading (supported reading)			
2a. Enjoys reading with others			
2b. Understands about directional conventions			
2c. Reads familiar refrains in a shared reading group			
2d. Reads the simpler words in a shared reading group			
2e. Increasing listening and spoken vocabulary through story language			
2f. Increasing own understanding of more complicated sentence structure			
2g. Uses new sentence patterns in conversations			
2h. Developing ear for more varied vocabulary			
2i. Increasing comprehension by understanding more complicated storyline			
2j. Increasing sight word bank			
2k. Developing fluency			
2l. Developing intonation, appropriate voice tones			
2m. Rereads a shred reading text independently			
2n. Shares in discussion about story content with group			
3. Developing as a reader by using other supported reading activities			
3a. Listens to tapes			
3b. Listens to tapes/turns the pages/looks at illustrations			
3c. Follows the words with finger while listening with tapes			
3d. Selects and reads an appropriate text with assistance (assisted reading)			
3e. Choral reads with a peer (paired reading)			

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	Consistently Evident	Sometimes Evident	Not Yet Evident
4. Individualized reading			
4a. Reads own writing materials			
4b. Reads familiar books			
4c. Choosens new books to read independently/taking new books home.			

A study of the practice of alternative assessment

DANGER: Road Construction Ahead

by
Paul Trunnell

Harborside Community
Center
East Boston

When A. first joined the class one year ago, she met with L., the previous teacher. The classroom was small with fluorescent lighting, but sun shone through the windowpanes. The walls, painted yellow, were concrete blocks. Other students worked on their assignments quietly, alone or in groups, and the assistant teacher moved among them. In the next room children's voices rang out amidst the banging of blocks and toys.

L. and A. sat down at a table to discuss A.'s reasons for coming to school. A. spoke quietly to her new teacher, conscious of her accent and carefully choosing her words. She was searching for response in her new teacher and considering her new environment. L. spoke softly too, making a lot of eye contact and trying to make A. feel comfortable. After talking for a few minutes, L. suggested they do a formal oral language assessment as a way to better understand A.'s needs. Afterwards, L. went over the results of the assessment. A. began to speak more freely about her difficulties with language and what she hoped to accomplish. L. listened carefully and made suggestions about activities to pursue. At the end of the meeting L. gave A. a book to start working on. A. smiled and thanked her new teacher.

After class, L. wrote up this initial interview:

"Speaks very well. There are some pronunciation difficulties which are being corrected with hearing and reading the word. A. has taught herself to speak English and does very well. She is concerned that, when faced with a crisis situation such as son in the hospital cut foot she can't express herself in English at all. We will work on this with vocab role playing.

"A. will try to find the time after and during her busy day caring for her family to practice writing. Write notes to her son who will respond with another written note for her to read etc. She will make shopping lists, lists of chores. Practice writing cursive. Read labels. Read children's books to Rosanna with practicing reading the story ahead of time for understanding pronunciation, then to interject excitement. She will get a pocket dictionary of any sort to use.

"Practice math skills mult div.

"Review the folder of work completed by copying and reading."

I reprint this episode in full because I believe it exemplifies much of what alternative assessment can be. The whole experience has been one of getting to know each other. The student has been thoroughly assessing her new surroundings as the teacher similarly assessed the student's needs. The comfort of the interaction has set the tone for the work to come. A. is shown that her needs are important and that the teacher is creating activities specific to these needs.

We learn in the record not only the teacher's point of view but also A.'s own concern about speaking in a crisis situation. The teacher has also guided A. through an extensive list of learning activities that A. can do in school or at home. All these can be touched on at a later assessment date. Improvement can be clearly defined in terms of personal goals, not disconnected skill attainment. Finally the narrative is translatable to the next teacher walking in the room—in this case, me.

ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT. I've read and spoken about it in very definitive and appreciative language. Why then is the practice so problematic—while simultaneously rich?

At a day devoted to teacher inquiry, Dulaney Alexander of Operation Bootstrap in Chelsea discussed the progress her program has made in the past year of alternative assessment. To paraphrase, she said, "Well, we don't use those forms anymore. But the philosophy behind them has become much more rooted in our practice."

I remember her comment because it is true for me. A year ago I submitted an article to this journal in which I discussed self assessment tools and methods I was using in my class and at our program. Many of the forms were minimal. Some had only existed for a few months. Well, here it is, a year later, and those forms are nowhere to be found in my class or this program. But I am continuing my efforts to better understand my process as a teacher in exploring and developing alternative assessment. In this article, I look at the ways I have experimented and the choices I have made along the way.

When I sat down to write this, I realized I had a lot more questions than answers. In fact I am going to be revealing a lot of (gulp) mistakes, which lord knows teachers don't really make.

I'VE BEEN TEACHING FOR TWO AND A HALF YEARS at the Harborside Community Center in East Boston. I've worked mostly with an ABE/Pre-GED population of diverse personal and ethnic backgrounds. My academic focus has generally included fractions, complete sentences, the food chain, the Conquest of Early America and the presidential race. I have worked in classes varying in size from five to 15 students with a wide range of skill and ability levels. The students' goals have similarly ranged from GED acquisition as a road to increased employment; to increased self-esteem; to basic language improvement for the sake of day to day communication.

In the class I teach now, each student has something similar to a progress portfolio. The portfolio includes initial registration and assessment tools: writing samples, a math survey, a learning and goals questionnaire, and a reading analysis, all of which are recorded onto math and grammar checklists and an initial learning contract. These documents are updated — ideally — about six weeks into the cycle and then again at the end of the cycle. In addition, students keep learning journals in which I respond; I keep a teaching journal of anecdotal information; and the class participates in a beginning planning session and a final class evaluation that provide the foundation for the curriculum.

The learning contracts and evaluations are very dialogue-oriented. I meet with students to discuss their progress and plan their goals and document what's been said. To this end, even the writing, math and reading samples and

A year ago I submitted an article to this journal in which I discussed self assessment tools and methods I was using in my class and at our program. Many of the forms were minimal. Some had only existed for a few months. Well, here it is, a year later, and those forms are nowhere to be found in my class or this program.

checklists form the conversation-starters, as it were. I find the meat of what we plan comes through the process.

Perhaps a useful way to proceed is to sit down with A.'s and M.'s folders, looking through the contents, and being guided by the use of the materials within: learning contracts, checklists, work samples, self-assessments, and teacher journal entries. I have used these tools most consistently and they should bear the weight of analysis.

I have chosen these students because the dialogue between us has been extensive and clearly illustrates to me, and I hope for the reader, many of the uses and purposes I have in assessment.

Though I relate the educational activities of two students, the focus is not on their learning or my teaching, but on the use and effectiveness of the assessment tools and activities. Also, these tools are valuable, in some way, to me, the teacher, but not necessarily to the student. If you asked them about these tools, they would likely have much different responses (and potentially much different assumptions about what should be assessed and what indicators they need).

These tools are valuable, in some way, to me, the teacher, but not necessarily to the student. If you asked them about these tools, they would likely have much different responses

STUDENT A:

A.'s folder is more incomplete than some. Her initial intake assessment is missing; some learning questionnaires are not filled out. Checklists stare out like rock face carved by some prehistoric gathering, in some incomprehensible language. A. sees her folder only once every six weeks or even fourteen weeks, if the middle of the cycle seems too hectic to slow down for a period of assessment.

Nevertheless, A.'s progress is clearly revealed in the teacher's log and the writing samples discussed below. The other tools were not as successful.

LEARNING CONTRACTS — The Problems. A.'s folder contains only two learning contracts for a one-year period. The first is the narrative that I reprinted at the beginning of this article. The second is dated April 27 — eight months after the first one.

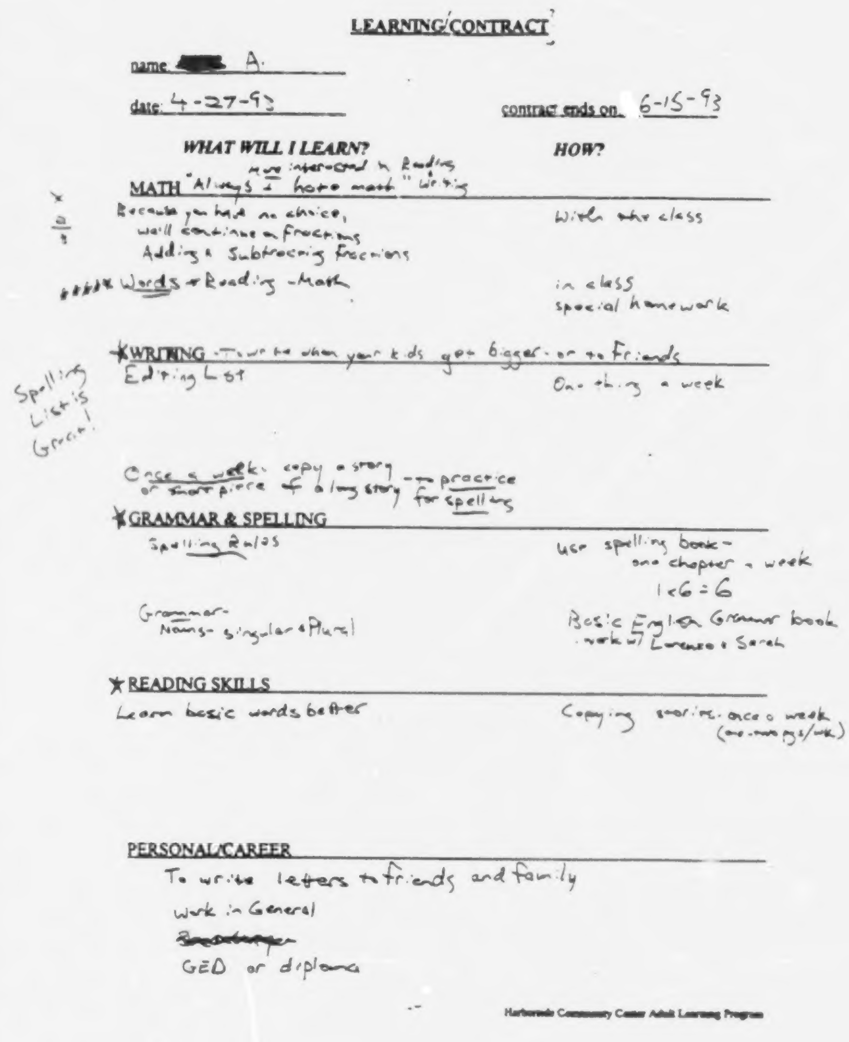
How was the first one used? Actually, not at all by me. I began fresh in September when I started teaching the class. I gave all the students an incoming assessment and held initial interviews with them. The info in the learning narrative is basically the same info that I got from A. in the fall.

Was that info recorded? Yes, on notebook paper that was never transferred to a learning contract. At that time I had not been using these tools for some time; they had posed more problems than solutions: too time consuming, not readily valuable, etc. Valuable though was the discussion. As I said, A. told me all of what was in her previous learning narrative. This discussion, in a teacher-student fashion, formed the basis of an oral learning contract which we talked about over the cycle. Also A. was placed in math and reading activities based on her initial assessment.

In December the class conducted our next major assessment. Once again, A. and I discussed the next moves and I recorded the interview on notebook paper (that unfortunately disappeared under the piles on my desk).

The April learning contract (Figure 1)

FIGURE 1



LEARNING CONTRACT

name [redacted] A.

date: 4-27-93

contract ends on 6-15-93

WHAT WILL I LEARN?	HOW?
MATH "Always I hate math" more interested in Reading Writing	
Because you have no choice, we'll continue on fractions Adding & Subtracting fractions	With the class
****Words + Reading - Math	in class special homework
WRITING - To write to them when your kids get bigger - or to Friends	
Editing List	One thing a week
Once a week: copy a story or short piece of a long story → practice for spelling	
GRAMMAR & SPELLING	
Spelling Rules	use spelling book - one chapter a week 1×6 = 6
Grammar- Nouns- singular & Plural	Basic English Grammar book - work w/ Lorenzo & Sarah
READING SKILLS	
Learn basic words better	Copying stories- once a week (one-two pgs/wk)
PERSONAL/CAREER	
To write letters to friends and family work in General ~~[illegible]~~ GED or diploma	

Spelling List is Great!

Harborside Community Center Adult Learning Program

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At this point I felt I was coming to understand the purpose and use of these tools again. I wanted to have some sort of record of our discussions.

is reprinted here. Much more structured than the learning narrative, it specifies academic categories and a "personal/ career" category. Why did the April contract survive? At this point I felt I was coming to understand the purpose and use of these tools again. I wanted to have some sort of record of our discussions.

A. and I sat down with her notebooks and discussed what had been good and what had been difficult. This contract focused heavily on strategies and tasks that A. could work on independently. Again, the curriculum itself would be structured, as much as possible, to address the variety of student needs in the class. The activities this time focused heavily on reading (science) and writing. Math was eliminated because Anna and other students felt that they were having difficulty focusing on too many subjects at once.

A.'s progress is noted only in the comment, "Spelling List is Great!"

Was this independent work completed? No. Why not? A. never got to it. In class she continued writing and reading science—very high level for her ESL abilities. She and other ESL level students focused periodically on grammar and spelling.

So this makes learning contracts sound awful (or at least my use of them). Can I say anything in my defense? Yes. They were not the only source of assessment for A.

TEACHER'S LOG—Success. Based on our discussion in December, A. and I focused on her writing. Our process in this endeavor is shown most clearly in the teacher's log that I keep daily. Here are the entries I penned for A. that Spring. These show her progress from being a frustrated writer to having a much better attitude and much better success.

1/20 — "Writing is daunting."

1/27 — "Her writings were very good, did not question her spelling or grammar, took her some time to complete 1 1/2 hours."

2/1 — "... took 2 1/2 hours to do the MLK writing assignment. 'I don't like to write.'"

2/3 — wrote a whole page—got started on her own, we talked it out two or three times and then picked the very first thing, then the second, and so on. Did very well. Worked on spelling afterwards. Rules and sight words."

2/4 — "A. to practice spelling is copying the story Little Italy—decided to do it on own. She enjoys story and said that spelling words that we went over she saw in the story. Making connections. Is self-motivated."

2/10 — "Writing, spelling, copied, seems more confident. Grammar scrambles. Checked her own spelling first. Got about half. Had Lorenzo [a fellow student] help and then I helped. Used her spelling list."

3/10— "A. once again — 'I'm learning a lot.'"

4/7 — "Finished newspaper stories—her spelling is getting very good... she also made a 'hide-a-word' for the skills page..."

4/13 — "A.'s writing is getting longer, more comfortable. We went over past tense verbs in a story she wrote last night."

The log records a clear sense of progress. This record can be made available to the student to show her the progress she has made.

Though some of the entries are not backed up with details or reasons, many entries explain the strategies and activities that she is using to success: her personal spelling list, having her peers assist her, ignoring grammar and spelling errors to encourage her work on content, having process conversations with her. Also some comments cause me to reflect on assignments that were ill-fitted for Anna, for example, a writing on Martin Luther King Day when she was not fully aware of who he was.

The entries have emerged when she and I would discuss her progress, in the form of encouragement—"remember when you...". In this way it served as a reminder for me.

When A. looked at this record (I gave it to her as I was preparing this article) she recalled all I had written and was proud of the progress she had made.

CHECKLISTS. Checklists (Figure 2) proved problematic with A. We had a grammar and a basic math skills checklist. The math checklist was too broad and did not represent the advances A. was making — advances that were small, skill-wise, but were very noticeable regarding strategies. She was successful working on math if she had the opportunity to work on it for several days at a time — not just one period. She understood better in a class format than independently. She was very good with the use of manipulatives. She worked well cooperatively. If we had a checklist for this, or at least a strategies list, then her progress would be much more apparent.

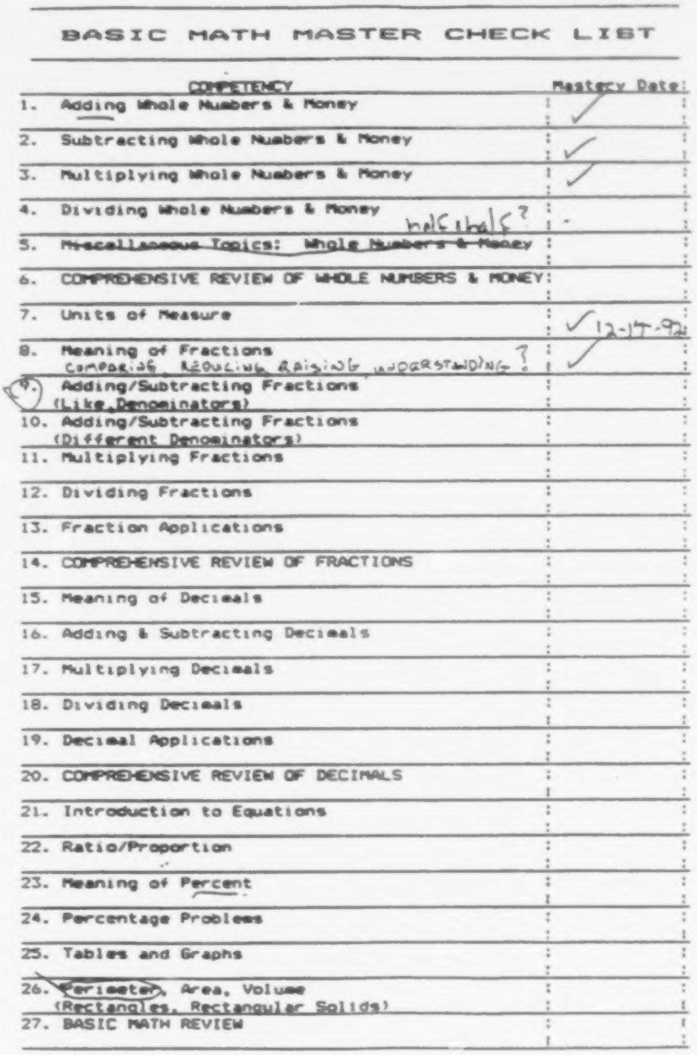
Though there is no record, the class structure regarding math was re-shaped as a result of students like A. Students were taken off an independently-paced workbook diet and fed group tasks, often with manipulatives and a lot of repetition. Perhaps to the credit of this structural response, A. seemed to become much more confident and self-aware in pursuing her math work. She went from thinking she could not do it to realizing she just hated it. She and other students proposed a structural change because of their frustration in pursuing math on a one-day-a-week schedule. The result was to focus on one subject at a time, for a whole week or weeks. This to me is a clear advance in learning self-awareness and empowerment—though it is nowhere recorded.

A. seemed to become much more confident and self-aware in pursuing her math work. She went from thinking she could not do it to realizing she just hated it.

These conclusions have made me return to the checklists and consider how to revise them to better suit the needs of the class and the students. The revision will include more strategies and learning behaviors and also be broken into smaller, more measurable steps.

WRITING SAMPLES. The writing samples contained in A.'s progress folder are good indications of how we focused on process together, with three drafts of a writing included (see Figures 3A-D). Importantly, this was the one thing in the folder that A. could look at and clearly sense her progress. The first sample we have, from last fall, shows a short corrected piece that still contains some grammar and writing and spelling mistakes. The second sample are all three drafts of a piece she had worked

FIGURE 2



BASIC MATH MASTER CHECK LIST

COMPLET'N GOAL

COMPETENCY	Mastery Date
1. Adding Whole Numbers & Money	✓
2. Subtracting Whole Numbers & Money	✓
3. Multiplying Whole Numbers & Money	✓
4. Dividing Whole Numbers & Money half i halfs?	-
5. Miscellaneous Topics: Whole Numbers & Money	
6. COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF WHOLE NUMBERS & MONEY	
7. Units of Measure	✓ 12-14-92
8. Meaning of Fractions COMPARING, REDUCING, RAISING, UNDERSTANDING?	✓
9. Adding/Subtracting Fractions (Like Denominators)	
10. Adding/Subtracting Fractions (Different Denominators)	
11. Multiplying Fractions	
12. Dividing Fractions	
13. Fraction Applications	
14. COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF FRACTIONS	
15. Meaning of Decimals	
16. Adding & Subtracting Decimals	
17. Multiplying Decimals	
18. Dividing Decimals	
19. Decimal Applications	
20. COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF DECIMALS	
21. Introduction to Equations	
22. Ratio/Proportion	
23. Meaning of Percent	
24. Percentage Problems	
25. Tables and Graphs	
26. Perimeter, Area, Volume (Rectangles, Rectangular Solids)	
27. BASIC MATH REVIEW	

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on in the Spring. She looked at this during our April conference and pointed out to me the progress she had made: better spelling, a longer piece, clearer writing. She could also see her process, that her first draft did not have to be perfect but that she would have several passes to improve it. She was very proud of her progress.

SELF-ASSESSMENTS. A.'s December self-evaluation is the only one I have on file. Her comments are the comments of many different students—broad and feeling-based.

"We learned alte about America and Indian... I don't understand math divicion... I wish to learned more about riding and writing..."

These comments are too broad to indicate much progress. The strength of this tool is more in the process. We do it as a class. The class discussion focuses on the curriculum, what has been valuable, and what we want to focus on in the future. When we do these, students seem very involved in answering the questions, too, which I think is an indication that taking the time to reflect is valuable, even if the record is so general.

STUDENT M.

M.'s folder resembles a "textbook" progress portfolio. There is a more complete array of contracts and checklists. Like A.'s folder, there are writing samples that M. chose to include in this folder, as well as assessment tools. In M.'s case these include a grammar pretest from one of the workbooks we use in the class. Also there are filled out reading and writing behavior checklists, adapted or borrowed from the Read/Write Now program in Springfield, MA.

M. is more familiar with her folder, too. She has paged carefully through the contents at different occasions.

*LEARNING CONTRACTS—**a useful tool.*** M.'s learning contract (see Figure 4) focuses her toward the External Diploma Program, a high school diploma program run by the Boston Public Schools. This specific, external goal provides helpful direction for both of us. Her January list offers independent activities for her completion. Goals also include specific competencies to achieve.

Reading Goal — to understand bigger words.
Make a list of words and go over these
Read bigger words in class
Use a vocabulary book to build your understanding

Writing —
Continue the good work
Practice for EDP
Work on editing list

Grammar —
Complex sentences
Punctuation—Commas

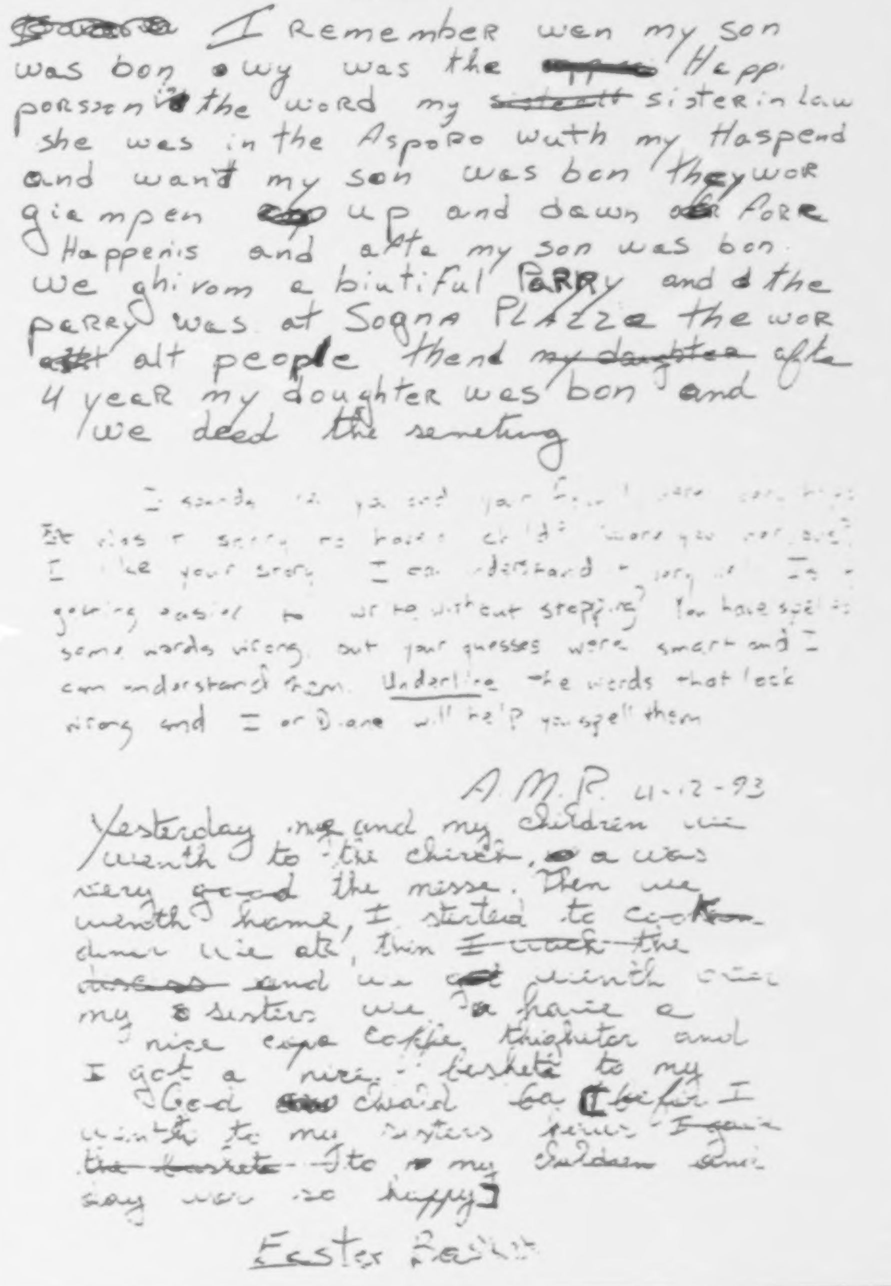
Math —
Units of Measure
Fractions

Other —EDP or GED
take EDP pretests or plan to take GED at the end of March

This contract has been a more effec-

The class discussion focuses on the curriculum, what has been valuable, and what we want to focus on in the future. When we do these, students seem very involved in answering the questions, too, which I think is an indication that taking the time to reflect is valuable

FIGURES 3A-B



I Remember wen my son was bon wy was the Happ. porsen in the word my ~~sisteeitt~~ sister in law she was in the Asporo wuth my Haspend and want my son was bon they wor giampen up and dawn for Happenis and afte my son was bon we ghivom a biutiful PaRRy and the paRRy was at Sogna PLAzza the woR alt people thend ~~my doughtea~~ afte 4 year my doughter was bon and we deed the semething

I sounds like you and your family were very happy. It was a scary to have a child? Were you nervous? I like your story. I can understand it very well. Is it getting easier to write without stopping? You have spelled some words wrong, but your guesses were smart and I can understand them. Underline the words that look wrong and I or Diane will help you spell them

A. M. P. 4-12-93

Yesterday me and my children we wenth to the chirch, a was very good the misse. Then we wenth hame, I started to cook dinner we ate, thin ~~I wach the dishes~~ and we wenth over my sisters we have a nise cupa coffie thoghuter and I got a nice basket to my God chaild befor I wenth to my sisters house ~~I gave the baskets~~ to my children and they wer so happy

Easter Basket

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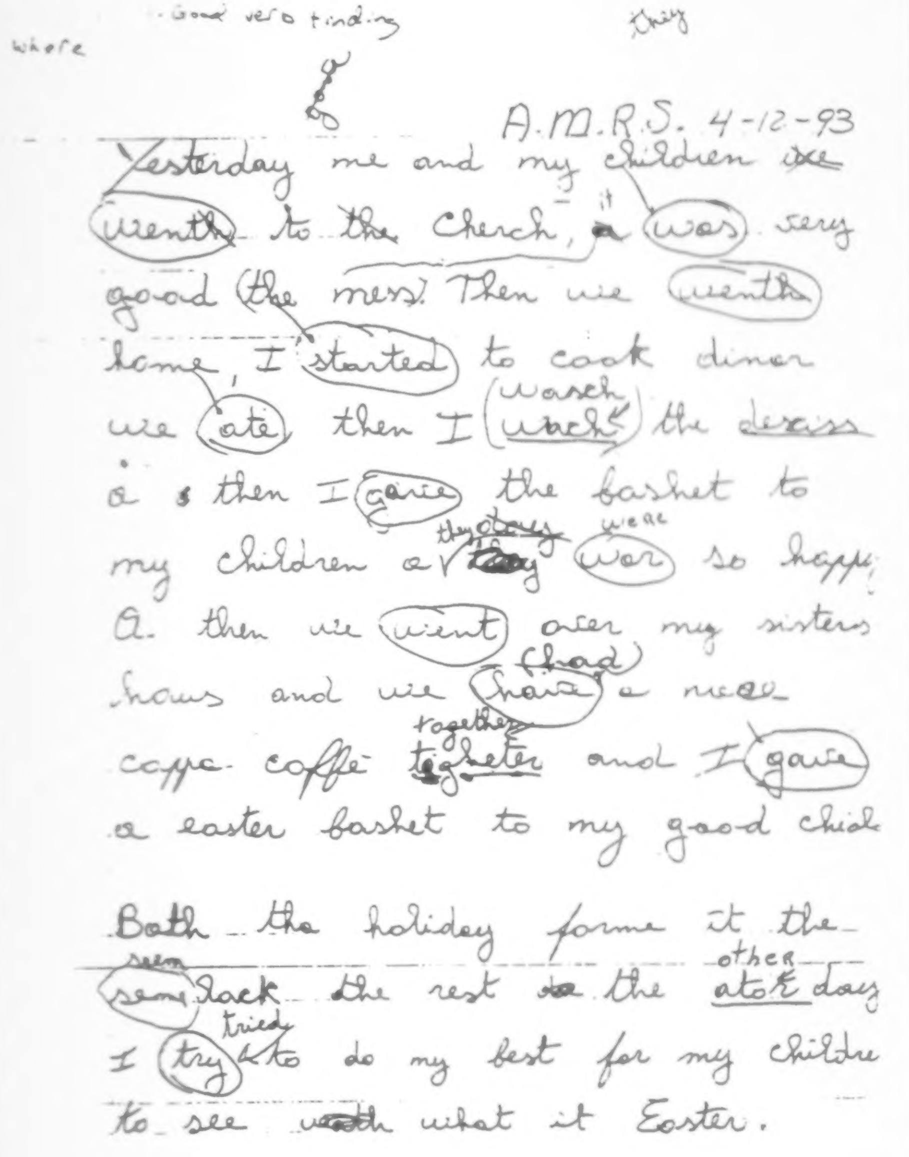
FIGURE 3C



Good verb finding They
where

A.M.R.S. 4-12-93

Yesterday me and my children ~~exe~~
it
wenth to the Cherch, ~~a~~ was very
good the mess. Then we wenth
home, I started to cook diner
wasch
we ate then I wach the dexiss
a then I gave the bashet to
they ~~they~~ were
my children a ~~they~~ war so happy
a. then we went over my sisters
(had)
hows and we have a nece
together
cappa coffe togheter and I gave
a easter bashet to my good chids

Both the holiday forme it the
seem other
seme lack the rest ~~a~~ the atok day
tried
I try to do my best for my childre
to see ~~wath~~ what it Easter.

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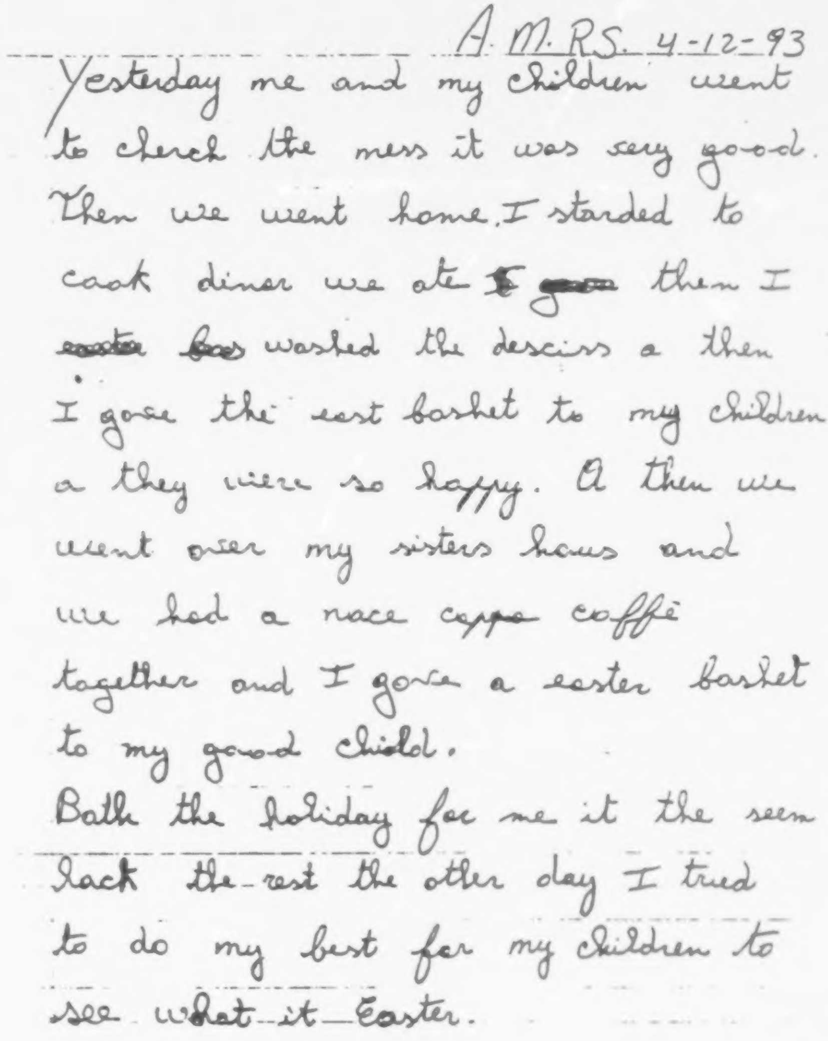
FIGURES 3D



A.M.R.S. 4-12-93

Yesterday me and my children went to cherch the mess it was sery good. Then we went home. I starded to caok diner we ate ~~I goo~~ then I ~~easter bas~~ washed the desciss a then I gave the east basket to my children a they were so happy. A then we went over my sisters haus and we had a nace ~~cope~~ coffe together and I gave a easter basket to my good chidd.

Bath the holiday for me it the seen lack the rest the other day I tried to do my best for my children to see what it Easter.

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tive tool with M. than with A., evident in the checks and comments that were placed on it during our April conference. It was used much more as intended, as a contract, and advances were noted and commended.

The April contract is more bare. The Reading section suggests again to understand bigger words (her stated goal) with weekly work in a vocabulary book as a suggested independent activity. The Grammar section is blank, and the Writing section suggests only an edit list. The Math section lists specific math activities ("adding with different denominators... whole numbers/mixed numbers/improper fractions") as well as an asterisk next to the goal "Become more Independent."

What became important in April, however, was a checklist made for her by the EDP program assessor. M. had taken the pretests and needed to master some math and writing skills before she could enroll in the program. A copy of this list was included in the progress portfolio and also in M.'s notebook. This provided her with a lot of self-direction and was referred to almost daily throughout the cycle.

This contract or checklist was a list on a sheet of notebook paper. Yet M. held on to it for three months while she worked towards completing those goals. As such, it shows that forms don't have to be carefully typeset or formatted to be effective.

In our June conference, M. announced that she was almost complete with her work toward the EDP. (The checklist had provided her with an exceptional tool for keeping herself on target). Moreover, her new contract reads very successfully. Notice the switch between her and my voice:

> *MATH: a lot better; didn't know to much about fractions and decimals and measurements [before]; [I now know more about] stores and how much things are going to cost—and also paying bills.*
>
> *(Working more independently-checking yourself and re-doing your problems if necessary.)*
>
> *"I like to do math now—seems to be a lot easier.*
>
> *(If you come to a problem you don't understand, you'll come back to it later, try to figure out what would make sense, go to a new page and come back to figure it out.)*

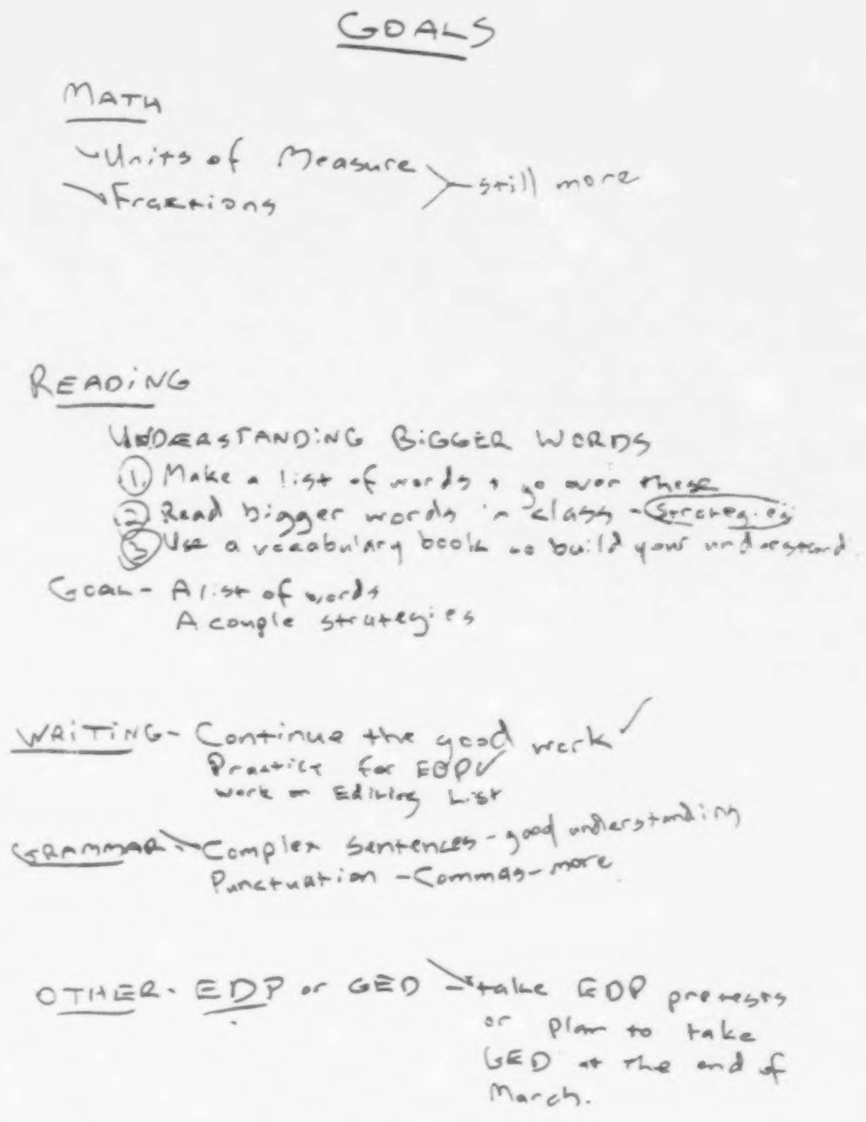
Notice that the comments focus on strategies rather than skills acquisition. Also, the recording relies heavily on self-report. Also, it is not a "contract" in the formal sense. It is halfway between an evaluation and a goals list. It does not require a signature, but it is an oral agreement. It is very effective as a record of strategies tried and true, or abandoned.

M.'s 5 week summer plan focuses her heavily on the EDP skills she has yet to master.

TEACHER'S LOG—how difficult it really was. I had an ongoing struggle with M. regarding independence. I say this only to give some background to help explain the sometimes emotional recordings in the teacher's log regarding M.'s progress. The reader should understand the tool's ability to record how

This contract or checklist was a list on a sheet of notebook paper. Yet M. held on to it for three months while she worked towards completing those goals. As such, it shows that forms don't have to be carefully typeset or formatted to be effective.

FIGURE 4



GOALS

MATH
- Units of Measure
- Fractions
> still more

READING
UNDERSTANDING BIGGER WORDS
① Make a list of words + go over these
② Read bigger words in class - Strategies
③ Use a vocabulary book to build your understand
Goal - A list of words
A couple strategies

WRITING - Continue the good work ✓
Practice for EDP ✓
work on Editing List

GRAMMAR - Complex sentences - good understanding
Punctuation - Commas - more

OTHER - EDP or GED - take EDP pretests
or plan to take
GED at the end of
March.

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difficult learning can really be, a process that does not show up on a checklist or in a grade or even a learning contract.

2/1—"she doesn't retain well..."
2/3—"M.—up to page 44 (some difficulty with directions)"
2/8—"she said, 'I feel like I'm doing better than before'... she has to be coaxed through reducing..."
2/9—"worked on math—addition of unlike denominators, whole numbers, reducing, and simplifying—I had her work with paper manipulatives. She said it helps a little to use paper. She was having trouble with simplifying for ex: 11/8 = 1 3/8. The division step keeps confusing her. I tried to get her to do it without division step—just do it in her head. But that was still a challenge—she doesn't believe she can do it."
2/10—Grammar stuff confused her—directions, pg. 37. Has she worked on this? I think so. Have her check her papers. She feels comfortable paired with someone, but she wants [my] okay. Safety and security is very important to her.
3/30—she successfully ploughed through 2 digit division—still wanted help, but was able to solve many problems on her own
4/13—worked on fractions—again id'd problems when directed, but needed a lot of support to get there. I gave less than usual. When she worked on another segment, she said she didn't understand. I said read the directions. She gave up in a second. I told her to take five minutes. She started crying and I held my ground and said i will help you in 5 minutes—try to figure it out—she complained that the directions were short. She was right. I showed her the lengthy example and explanations that were on the same page. She hadn't realized. She apologized for crying. I told her I want her to work independently. She held on and got work done. Good for her.
5/10—focus on one subject at a time...
5/17—checked her own math work—got many of them right...

Very emotional but clearly a showing of what learning is—an emotional and highly complicated task that does not only include skill acquisition. This is recorded in detail here. Note—mostly very spare, not a lot of details. The detailed entry of 2/9 is helpful, I am sure, for the reader to understand better the difficulty. But remember, this is not designed for an outside reader.

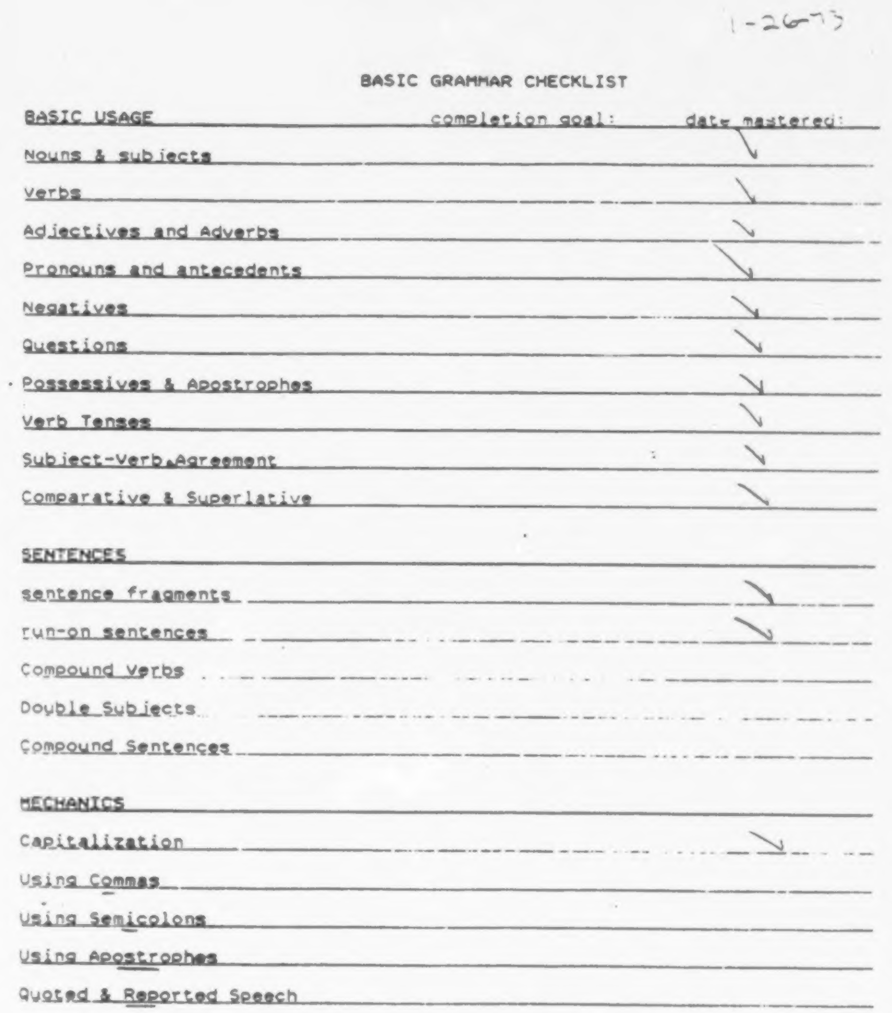
This process has been discussed by M. and me since. She agrees she is working more independently. Again, she has not seen these notes. Would I share these with her the way I would share the notes with A.? Yes. I think it is respectful of a student to be up front about your teaching assumptions—if done in a sensitive manner.

Another obvious value of these notes is for my own improvement. What strategies have I used? What has worked? What hasn't?

Another obvious value of these notes is for my own improvement. What strategies have I used? What has worked? What hasn't? This example, for me, is one of the most powerful of my teaching beliefs. Perhaps there is a way that it can be used too, in teacher sharing at my center, or in a teacher self-evaluation.

CHECKLISTS. M. benefited more from checklists than A. This was most cer-

FIGURE 5



1-26-93

BASIC GRAMMAR CHECKLIST

BASIC USAGE	completion goal:	date mastered:
Nouns & subjects		✓
Verbs		✓
Adjectives and Adverbs		✓
Pronouns and antecedents		✓
Negatives		✓
Questions		✓
Possessives & Apostrophes		✓
Verb Tenses		✓
Subject-Verb Agreement		✓
Comparative & Superlative		✓
SENTENCES		
sentence fragments		✓
run-on sentences		✓
Compound Verbs		
Double Subjects		
Compound Sentences		
MECHANICS		
Capitalization		✓
Using Commas		
Using Semicolons		
Using Apostrophes		
Quoted & Reported Speech		

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tainly true of the highly motivating EDP checklist that she was using. A., as an upper level ESL student, was out of range of the checklists that were in our class for higher level ABE math and grammar skills.

Over time, M. made clear progress on the math checklist (Figure 5), though again, her actual progress in self-motivation and learning strategies were still not listed on a checklist. Her progress on a grammar checklist was more ill-defined. Her initial ability was measured on a workbook pretest. The checklist, which is patterned after the competencies that were worked on in the workbook, does not record much of M.'s progress because M.'s work in the book was sporadic. The checklist needed to better reflect the actual work she was doing in order to indicate progress.

WRITING SAMPLES. M.'s writing samples are much less instructive than A.'s. Why? She has three different samples from over the year that she included when asked to choose something. They do not reflect the process reflected in A.'s. They, to my eye, look very similar in terms of style and ability. Why? When she came into the class, M. was already a competent writer. She has the ability to write long, personal narrative pieces. Her spelling is very good. Our focus only recently has been on critical, non-narrative writing. When these samples are included in her folder, they will indicate the culmination of a lot of work. For the meantime, the work reflects M.'s competence but not her advance.

SELF-ASSESSMENTS. M.'s December self-assessment (Figure 6) reports "we learned about Columbus discovering a new Continent" and that the most meaningful of what we'd studied was math and science. Her concerns about the class include that many people come to class late and this seems frustrating to her. Also, a cooperative project frustrated her because "we could not make up our minds for a long while."

This is vague in terms of acquired skills; but valuable in terms of learning attitudes. It could be concluded that M. did not at the time of this recording enjoy cooperative projects. Also, she gave me a cue as a teacher that the class could be more structured—or at least she would prefer her learning experience to be as such.

Her May self-assessment includes a lot of self-praise and awareness of learning. "What I am most proud of is knowing what and who I am." "My biggest breakthrough was figuring things out that I was not sure of before." "My favorite class was science because I learned things I never knew before." "The goals I did not achieve are learning bigger words because I do not understand them."

The difference in these comments is in part controlled by the tools: different questions were used on different occasions. The latter occasion seems to have been much more effective in revealing learning attitudes and encouraging self-assessment. Though her descriptions are still a little vague, I think this is because self-assessment is a challenge.

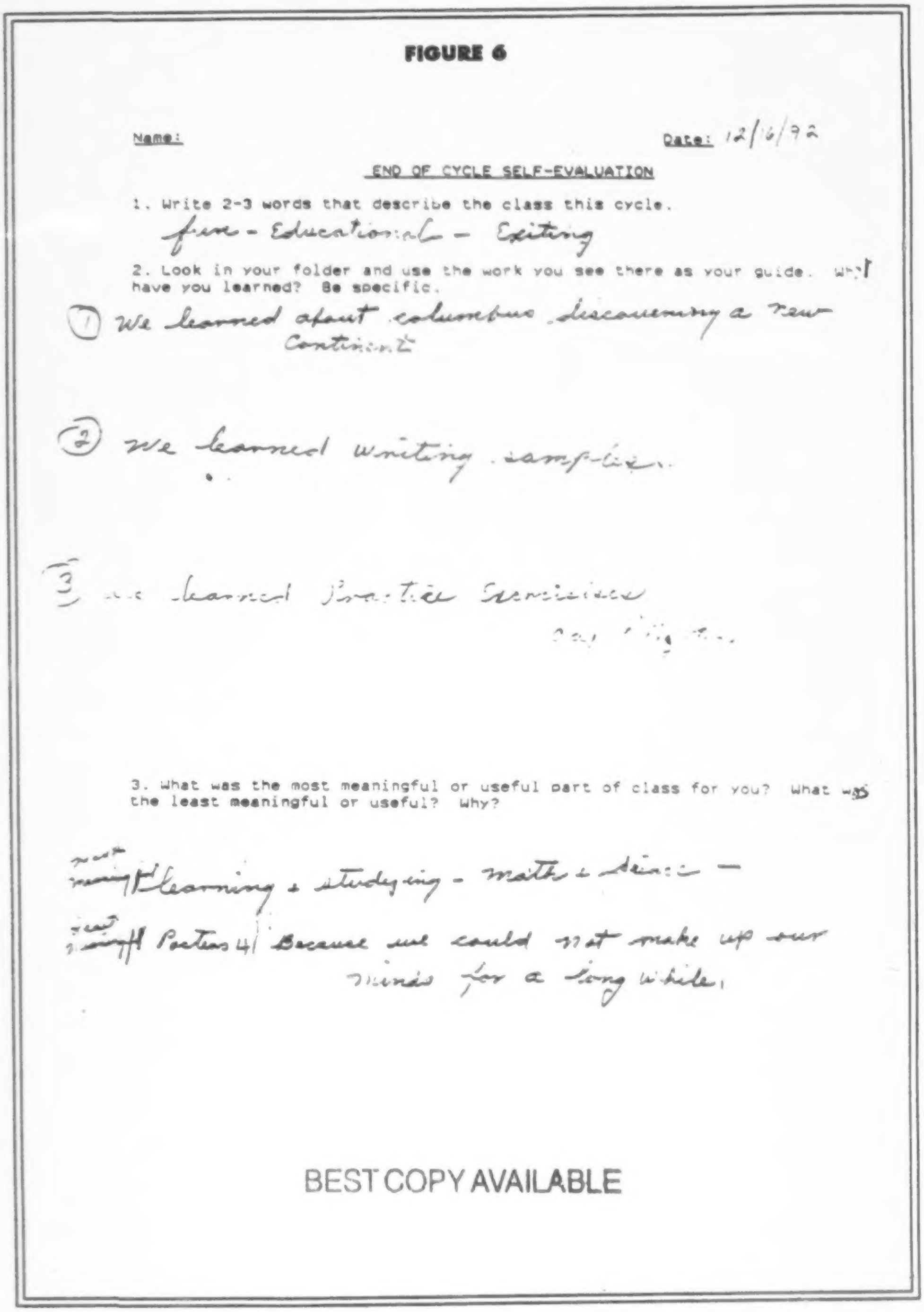

FIGURE 6

Name:

Date: 12/6/92

END OF CYCLE SELF-EVALUATION

1. Write 2-3 words that describe the class this cycle.

fun - Educational - Exiting

2. Look in your folder and use the work you see there as your guide. What have you learned? Be specific.

① We learned about columbus discovering a new Continent

② we learned writing samples.

③ we learned Practice Exercises [illegible]

3. What was the most meaningful or useful part of class for you? What was the least meaningful or useful? Why?

most meaningful learning & studying - math & science -

least meaningful Posters 4| Because we could not make up our minds for a long while.

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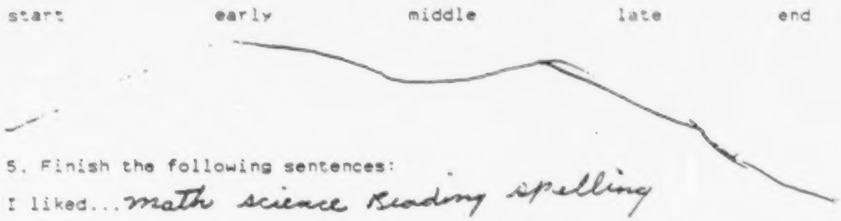
FIGURE 6 (CONTINUED)

4. Graph your energy and enthusiasm this cycle below:



5. Finish the following sentences:

I liked... math science Reading spelling

I didn't like... not having Breaks on time

I don't understand... most of science + history

I am frustrated by... People Borrowing money and Not Paying Ba

Next cycle, I wish... we could learn more then now.

6. What changes should we make in class for next cycle?

Every one showing up on time
try to be here Every wk unless its something
Important or you're sick.

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REFLECTIONS ON MY EXPLORATION INTO ASSESSMENT

WHAT do I think I am assessing?
Clearly I am not assessing for skill acquisition alone. I am looking for increases in confidence, independence, learning self-awareness, ability to take new challenges. I am trying to understand people's different learning styles: whether they work well cooperatively or independently; whether structure is essential for self-motivation. I want to understand the student's process. I want to see—and I want the student to see—the complicated reality of learning.

I am trying to understand people's different learning styles: whether they work well cooperatively or independently; whether structure is essential for self-motivation. I want to understand the student's process. I want to see—and I want the student to see—the complicated reality of learning.

Am I REALLY assessing it?
The checklists that I use are skills-based, not strategy-based, and thus do not record all the information I want. Though I may speak to the students of their advances in these affective areas, the forms we use do not necessarily speak the same language. The teacher's log and the learning contracts do record the strategies and attitudes, as do the self assessments. The writing samples can show process as well as product.

Activities need to be ROUTINE to show progress
Though it is a valuable process, to sit down with students and discuss their goals, the learning contract itself is useful mostly when it is used periodically, and updated. Independent activities are effective if they are narrowly targeted toward the completion of a goal such as entrance into the EDP program. And I think independent activities need to be constantly reinforced—perhaps a weekly check-in time with a student; or time slotted in class for independent work (neither of which my class had).

Checklists need to reflect the work that is being conducted in the classroom. The competencies need to be specific and attainable. If possible, checklists could be made for strategies and learning attitudes and not just skills. They need to be referred to often enough so that they are seen as a tool and not an artifact from an archeological dig.

All this is fine. But what is helpful FOR THE STUDENT?
I have told you what is valuable to me. But only a few of these tools and activities seem to have been genuinely appreciated by the students. The Writing Sample was the only thing A. used to report her own progress. The EDP checklist was the one device that M. seemed to "own." A powerful trait of alternative assessment is that it has the possibility to become the property of the students.

Teaching logs are valuable for me, the teacher. And valuable to show process—the complicatedness of the learning negotiations. If the students get to see it, then it will be helpful for them too.

If the tools are supposed to empower the students, then the materials need to be in the possession of the students. Teacher's logs need to be provided and discussed. The checklists and contracts need to be possessed by the students. The class needs to have time and structure to accommodate reflecting and utilizing these tools.

It is important for teachers to discuss the use of these tools. They are alternative, which means that, potentially, each class is using different forms and procedures. In a sense, we are all involved in exploring the backroads. Some of us with compasses in hand, carefully mapping our road; but probably more of us taking the sudden turn off and trying to remember which road led where.

The GOALS project has allowed many of us the resources to carefully map our route, and to compare our travels. I hope the "Atlas" we have compiled in our Toolkit will help others explore other roads and paths, and that we will all have the opportunity to share, revise, and learn from each other.

☑

From EGAP to Beyond

Adapting Tools to New Programs

by
Martha Oesch

Community Action, Inc.
Haverhill, MA

Prior to my involvement in Component 3 of the GOALS Project, the use of alternative assessment in Community Action, Inc.'s education programs was confined primarily to one program, Adult Education for the Homeless. It was also slowly being developed for the adult basic education and English as a Second Language program.

As in many programs, the funding source tended to overly influence the type of assessment done. There had always been a distinction between what happened in the DOE-funded programs and the Job Training and Partnership Administration (JTPA)-funded programs. DOE-funded programs encouraged the development of new materials and alternative means of assessing student progress. But the requirements of JTPA-funded programs often limited how far one could go beyond traditional testing and the use of competency-based materials.

The staff had begun experimenting how to integrate more alternative assessment techniques into the JTPA curriculum while still meeting contractual obligations. Participation in Component 3 provided a mechanism to reflect on how to do this better, what the considerations were, and how to continue adapting materials to other programs.

As noted above, Community Action, Inc. has been using an alternative assessment tool in its Adult Education for the Homeless Program for three years. The tool, the Educational Goals Assessment Package (EGAP) (see Germanowski, Adventures in Assessment, Volume I) was originally developed for a DOE-funded adult program serving new readers to those ready for the GED. Despite its original focus for DOE-funded programs, CAI has been modifying EGAP for quite a different use, namely its Entry Employment Experience Program, a GED program for youth who have dropped out of school. The EEE program is a JTPA-funded youth program serving learners at a pre-GED and GED level. These differences influenced the modifications that were made. I will briefly describe the EGAP, and then discuss how and why it was adapted for use in the EEE program.

EGAP ALREADY MODIFIED FOR ADULT ED PROGRAM

The EGAP contains initial assessment and goal setting tools, as well as a means for tracking on-going learner progress. CAI made several revisions to the EGAP for the Adult Education for the Homeless Program. One revision was in format. The teacher found that learners were not filling in the goal for the next day on their daily logs. The teacher increased the space dedicated to this to emphasize its importance.

Another revision was the addition of a checklist for reading to give the teacher a better idea of what people have read and to see what they are interested in reading to facilitate planning instruction and to understand motivations.

The goals of the EEE program are to assist youths to attain a GED and to increase their reading by two grade levels and then one of three other options: to transfer to a skills training program, enter higher education, or get a job. The program serves 30 youths each year.

The funding source conducts an initial educational assessment using the ABLE. Learners must score at a minimum 4th grade level in reading and math to be referred. If accepted, learners are in the program for an average of six months.

Meeting contractual outcomes is imperative to re-funding. Learners enrolled are reassessed by the EEE teacher in reading and math using a modified SRA math assessment and a teacher-developed reading test.

The teacher wanted learners to be more reflective of and to take more responsibility for their learning. The short-term nature of the program and its required outcomes made it important for the learners to make a strong commitment to following through on their educational goals.

NEEDED BETTER ASSESSMENT TOOL TO FOCUS ON STRENGTHS, NOT WEAKNESSES

Missing from the assessment array was a means for the teacher to identify learners' strengths and to more quickly engage them in the learning process. The teacher wanted learners to be more reflective of and to take more responsibility for their learning. The short-term nature of the program and its required outcomes made it important for the learners to make a strong commitment to following through on their educational goals. The pattern had been that learners dropped out or did not complete if they were not committed or did not assume responsibility for what happened to themselves in the program.

The initial assessment performed by the funding source tends to focus more on identifying learner weaknesses and how to address those than on identifying learner strengths. The teacher wanted a more positive means for engaging with learners to demonstrate that she was there not to "fix" the learner, but to help the learner build on his/her strengths.

The EEE teacher used the checklist from the EGAP for this purpose for a year, but found this did not work well for the learners. Many of the youths are at a GED level and felt some of the lists were silly and not relevant. The teacher also decided that the EGAP lists were too formulaic for the youths. They did not see the meaning of it, and saw the EGAP as something the teacher was making them do.

The teacher also wanted more extended answers than the "yes," "no," or other one-word answers she was receiving to questions. The teacher felt the format was too confusing to learners. Youths would check topics just because they thought they needed to for test purposes. When asked why they had checked a particular topic, the youths could not explain their choices. The teacher wanted to get the learners thinking more and coming up with new ideas of what they wanted to do.

In amending the EGAP, the teacher made two major changes. First, the teacher identified which topics the learners had consistently checked off from the EGAP lists and then wrote an open-ended question which related to the topic. The teacher kept the EGAP list for types of reading done by the student, but added a section for the learner to list what they had read in each category.

Second, the teacher revised the daily log. The EEE teacher used the EGAP's daily log for a year, but found that learners were not consistent in filling out the log daily. They either forgot or did not know what to write. The teacher modified it to a twice-weekly log. Learners do a weekly plan on Mondays and — if they want — can comment on their progress throughout the week in a space provided. On Fridays, each learner writes about the week, what worked for her and what she will do differently the following week. The teacher will be using this form in the fall. Because the program is time limited, the teacher felt it important to set specific weekly goals.

On Fridays, each learner writes about the week, what worked for her and what she will do differently the following week. Because the program is time limited, the teacher felt it important to set specific weekly goals.

At the same time, the teacher was adapting the EGAP for use in the classroom, she was also working on revising the curriculum. The changes in the curriculum included incorporating the use of math manipulatives and hands-on science lessons. The revisions in the EGAP to better engage learners in their own learning were also being addressed in the curriculum.

Though the two assessment forms are different in format — and to some extent content — the ultimate purpose of both the EGAP and the EEE Initial Interview and Weekly Plan are the same: to assist learners in taking responsibility for their learning and to give teachers information for developing individualized instruction.

☑

ENTRY EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE PROGRAM
EDUCATION COMPONENT: INITIAL INTERVIEW

Name: ______________________________ Date: __________ Age: ____

First Language: ______________________

Educational background: ______________________________

Last school attended: ______________________

Last grade attended: ________ Last grade completed: __________

Date last attended: ______________________

Self-Rating

My reading skills are: Excellent Good Fair Need Work
Explain your rating:

____

My math skills are: Excellent Good Fair Need Work
Explain your rating:

____

My writing skills are: Excellent Good Fair Need Work
Explain your rating:

____

The following questionnaire is designed to provide you with an opportunity to communicate with the education instructor about what you'd like to learn and how you learn best. The best learning takes place in a supportive environment where people are able to discuss ideas and problems as they arise. Communication is the mutual responsibility of all involved in the learning process and this questionnaire will begin that communication process.

Career/Work Goals

I would like to...

attend college to study ______________________________
attend a training program for ______________________________
get a job as a ______________________________

The thing I need to work hardest on to achieve my career and educational goals is

____

Personal Goals

The following questions give you an opportunity to describe other things about yourself besides your educational and career goals. Please complete all statements and give as much information and explanation as possible.

In my free time, I like to

____

Some of my characteristics which I like are

____

Some obstacles that keep me from doing things I'd like to do are

____

Other things I would like to learn (please describe any experience with the following)

managing money effectively ______________________________

understanding pricing, discounts, etc. ______________________________

registering to vote ______________________________

getting a library card ______________________________

learning to use the library ______________________________

getting involved in community activities ______________________________

learning about careers such as ______________________________

protecting my health effectively ______________________________

managing time effectively ______________________________

Please add at least one other thing you would like to learn ______________________________

____

Please list at least one thing which you can teach others ______________________________

____

Do you learn better working with others or alone? Please explain. ______________________________

____

Do you learn best by watching someone else, by reading about something, by listening to someone or by doing something yourself? Explain, and if possible, give an example of something you learned well and how you learned it. ______________________________

____

Interests

There are no right or wrong answers for the following questions. The purpose is to identify possible interests and learning styles for each person.

My favorite subject in school was ________________ because

The most memorable thing I ever learned in school was

I've always wanted to learn or do

Name at least two things you've seen or heard about and would like to understand better

Would you rather read a good story or a news magazine? Why?

Would you rather listen to an older relative talk about your family history or listen to the news? Why?

Would you rather discuss personal and social values and how they fit into your life or how the body works? Why?

Name at least two other things you enjoy reading about or discussing (some examples might be hobbies, places you've lived, sports, current events or news you're concerned about, health, movies, music, etc.)

Life Skills

Describe a situation where you were able to help yourself or someone else accomplish something (some examples may include resolving a conflict, doing a budget, doing something positive for your health, etc.)

Have you ever been unable to do something you really wanted to do because you didn't have the necessary skills or information? Please describe

Are there forms, labels, documents, reference books, maps, etc. which you would like to learn more about?

Personal Reading and Writing

I would like to read for enjoyment (please list anything you've read recently in any category)

adventure ____________
history ____________
poetry ____________
TV & movies ____________
how-to ____________
science fiction ____________

mystery ____________
sports ____________
religion ____________
true-life stories ____________
hobbies ____________
magazines ____________

romance ____________
music ____________
horror ____________
self-help ____________
parenting ____________
newspapers ____________

I have written or would like to write:

poems ____________
journal/diary ____________
news articles ____________

songs ____________
essays ____________
letters ____________

stories ____________
school papers ____________
advice to others ____________

Other reading or writing skills you have or would like to have:

____

____

The best thing I ever read was ____

____

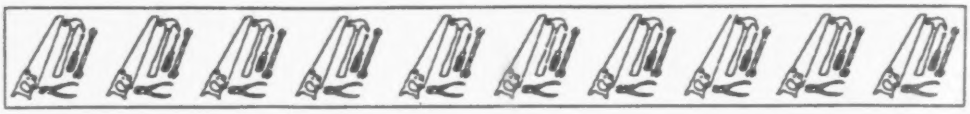
The best movie or TV program I ever saw was ____

I also enjoy:

cartooning ____________
singing ____________

painting ____________
other ____________

drawing ____________



EDUCATIONAL GOALS PLAN

Name: ______________________________ Date: ____________

What do you want to accomplish in our class? ____________________________

These are my educational goals. I'll work on them every day in class:

1. ____
2. ____
3. ____
4. ____
5. ____
6. ____

WEEKLY PLAN

Name: ______________________________ Date: ____________

My goals for this week are (include page numbers, specific tests, writing, as well as understanding concepts and ideas, etc.)

1. ____
2. ____
3. ____
4. ____
5. ____

Please feel free to make changes in your goals during the week and voice any concerns, questions, etc. in the spae below.

Day Your Comments

____

____

Friday: How did your week go? What strategies were helpful and what will you do differently next week?

The Learner's Log

Evolution of An Assessment Tool

by
Caroline Gear

International Language Institute (ILI) of Massachusetts, Inc.
Northampton

International Language Institute (ILI) has always been extremely interested in alternative assessment. Since the program began in 1984, students have been asked to evaluate their progress and their classes through ongoing oral feedback in the classroom, individual conferences with students, and written mid-term and final evaluations. Through in-house workshops and attendance at state-wide and national conferences, ILI staff have focused on assessment and over the years have added daily dialogue journals, student writings, taped recordings of the students, and — the subject of this article — learner logs as a way of looking at student's progress through portfolio assessment.

Being involved in Component #3 has been rewarding because it has allowed ILI to study alternative assessment indepth through intense discussions about assessment with other Component #3 participants and the chance to examine tools that other programs are using in the field.

Meeting with participants of Component #3 over the last year and a half has made it quite apparent that alternative assessment is an ongoing process; tools that ILI used last year are not used now, the weekly evaluation tool has changed many times, new tools have been adopted as a result of sharing tools from other programs, and we still feel that more tools need to be developed for our low-level ESL and ESL Literacy classes.

ILI's involvement with Component #3 helped us to refine our Learner's Log, and the purpose of this paper is to discuss the evolution of the Learner's Log as an assessment tool.

THE LEARNER'S LOG

At ILI, portfolio assessment is used to measure progress by both the student and the teacher. Each student has a folder that is kept in their classroom. In the folder are the student's learner log — a series of assessment tools that are stapled together (filled out on a weekly basis) and writings that the students have placed in their folder. The student tapes are kept in the classroom, and the students keep their dialogue journals during the course. At the end of the course, everything in the portfolio is kept in the student's file.

The original components in the first Learner's Log (Winter 1992) contained an assessment tool which students filled out on a weekly basis. Students responded to the following statements:

- Some things I have learned
- Some things I didn't understand
- Some things I liked
- Some things I didn't like
- Some things I want to do next week

(adapted from the Read/Write/Now ongoing assessment tool, called "A Learning Log," Janet Kelly, Adventures in Assessment, Volume 2.)

The students seemed to be intrigued

by the collection and were receptive to writing their thoughts about the course at the end of each week. Also included in the Learner's Log was a learning styles instrument from the Center for Innovative Teaching Experiences. This tool asked students to respond to statements about their learning styles. (ILI only used this tool in the Spring 1992 program, as it met mixed reviews by the students. Instructors are looking into other tools that help students determine their individual learning styles.)

It quickly became apparent that you can't hand out this neat little booklet and expect your students to respond to the statements in the detail desired by the teacher. Most importantly, students need to know why the instructor is taking class time to discuss progress and self-assessment. Students need to understand the importance of looking at their progress weekly.

It quickly became apparent that you can't hand out this neat little booklet and expect your students to respond to the statements in the detail desired by the teacher. Most importantly, students need to know why the instructor is taking class time to discuss progress and self-assessment.

As we read the responses in the Learners' Logs ILI came back to the same questions: How can we get students to look at their learning? How can we help them see their learning as a process and evaluation of their progress as part of the process? How can we get the students to measure their own progress rather than relying solely on the instructor? How can we get our students to answer the weekly evaluation questions with more than one sentence? How can we get our students to critique the classes and know it isn't going to be taken as an insult to the instructor?

At the end of the Winter 1992 program, ILI asked the students if they felt that the Learner's Log was useful. Most students felt it was valuable, and we decided to continue with it and add some additional pieces. The Spring 1992 Learner's Log was presented to the students on the first day of class rather than at the end of the first week. Some additional pieces required students to fill out and understand the pieces on the first day of class. Included in the Spring Program's Learner's Log were the following:

- a page that listed general course information
- a program entry writing sample
- a page divided into four sections of expectations, goals, fears, and self-help for the program that students responded to
- reading and viewing logs.

In the latter, students keep a running list of what they have read and what they have seen on TV, with comments.

The Learner's Log also took on more of a professional appearance with a colored cover and end page.

At the end of the Spring Program students were asked for feedback on the Learner's Log. Students still felt it was valuable for them to fill out, but they didn't like filling out the same assessment tool week after week. The instructors also found lower level learners had difficulty responding to the statements; very often the statement of "Some things I like" was answered, "I like everything." The instructors decided that the weekly assessment was working, but the tools needed to be changed.

In the Summer 1992 program, the original weekly assessment tool was exchanged for two assessment tools that alternated weekly. One assessment tool asked each student to list the week's activities and to rate them for both their enjoyment and value. The teacher writes these activities on the board; the students record the specific activities in the Learner's Log and rate them. The tool also asks the students to answer the following questions:

- Which activities were the most helpful? Why?
- Which activities were the least helpful? Why?

The other assessment tool that was used was developed at the Community Learning Center.[1] This tool divides the assessment into two sections: in class and out of class:

In Class:

1. Now I understand........................
2. In class, I need help with...............

Outside of Class:

3. This week I spoke English................
4. I listened to.............................
5. I read English............................
6. I wrote English...........................

The Summer 1992 students all seemed to write more on the weekly evaluation that asked them to list the activities and rate them. It appeared that the process of listing all the activities first and then evaluating them was much more effective than having the students respond to statements about what they had learned/done in class. The students still expressed the desire to have different weekly assessment tools. In the Fall 1992 program the Learner's Log looked similar to the Summer 1992 Learner's Log, but in the 12 week course the weekly evaluations alternated between three assessment tools instead of two. The instructors also came up with an additional final evaluation that contained the following questions:

- Has your English improved since you started this course?
- Do you use more English now outside of the classroom? Where? With whom?
- What were your goals when you began the class, and are you closer to achieving them?
- Was this class different from what you expected? How?
- Was the style of teaching comfortable for you? Effective for you?
- What activities did you like to do outside of class?
- What did you learn about yourself?
- Did the class make you feel good about yourself?
- If you were the instructor, what would you do differently?
- Would you like more interaction with other ILI students?
- Additional comments

The instructors were very pleased with this final evaluation as it sparked a lot of discussion first, and students wrote quite a bit in their answers. The students were still responding more to the assessment tool that had students list the activities. It was decided the Winter 1993 Learner's Log would only use that assessment tool for the weekly assessment.

The process of listing all the activities first and then evaluating them was much more effective than having the students respond to statements about what they had learned/done in class.

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[1] See Appendix 7 in "Three by Three by Four: Ongoing Assessment at the Community Learning Center" by Karen Ebbit, Priscilla Lee, Pam Nelson, and Joann Wheeler in *Adventures in Assessment Volume 2: Ongoing.*

THE SECOND YEAR

Throughout the program, students meet individually with the instructor to discuss progress. In the Winter 1993 Program, ILI began documenting the individual exit interview with the instructor. The instructor wrote down what the student and teacher discussed during the interview. The exit interview is kept in the Learner's Log. The student interview record included the following areas:

- ♠ Goals met
- ♠ Goals not met
- ♠ Recommendations
- ♠ Plans for future action

The Spring 1993 Learner's Log brought back the alternating assessment tools, but this time allowed students to choose their weekly assessment tool. Students still preferred the assessment tool that listed the activities first, but the instructors were still not satisfied with the tool. At the end of the Spring 1993 Program Tim Rees and Pat Sandoval developed a two-page weekly assessment tool that is being used in the Summer 1993 Program (See Figure 1). The instructors have been using the tool for three weeks and are very pleased with the results.

The instructors also developed a new final student evaluation (Figure 2) which will be evaluated by both students and instructors at the end of the Summer 1993 Program.

During the Learner's Log evolution, ILI has realized the importance of continually reevaluating the tools and how teachers and students alike must understand that assessment is a necessary process. It is safe to say that the Learner's Log will never be a finished product. Our ongoing evaluation of our Learner's Log is not just within the parameters of a given program. Plans are already being made to create weekly assessment tools for the beginning ESL learner to develop a tool for students of all levels that would help them look at how they learn. Stay tuned for the next installment!

☑

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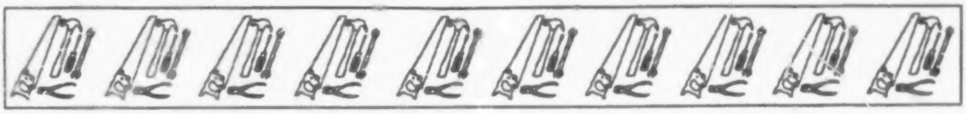

FIGURE 1

WEEKLY EVALUATION OF CLASS ACTIVITIES

Date: ______________________________

Please rate the week's activities for both their enjoyment and value. "1" is extremely low and "5" is extremely high. For example, you might feel that a particular activity was a lot of fun, but you don't think that it helped you learn anything new. In this case you may rate it "4" or "5" in enjoyment and "1" or "2" in value.

Enjoyment	Value	Name of activity

Which activities were the most helpful? Why?

____

____

____

____

Which activities were the least helpful? Why?

____

____

____

____

Hours in class: ________

Homework assignments given: ________

Homework assignments completed: ________

Circle an answer:

I spoke English with people who speak my language.	YES	NO	SOME
I wrote in my journal every day.	YES	NO	SOME
I used what I learned in class when I left the school.	YES	NO	SOME
Did you speak or listen in class?	SPEAK	BOTH	LISTEN

What did you read in English outside of class?

newspapers *magazines* *stories* *books* *other*____________________

What did you watch in English outside of class?

movies *soaps* *comedies* *news* *documentaries* *other*______________

The BIG QUESTION!!!

Write about you and your experiences both in and out of class this week.... or...how's it going?

____

____

____

____

____

____

____

____

____

____

____

____

FIGURE 2

FINAL STUDENT EVALUATION

Teacher's name__________

Dear Student: We are very happy that you have been a participant in this program. We hope that you have enjoyed your time with us, and that you have learned a lot of English. To help us evaluate this program and plan for future programs, we ask you to complete this form. We appreciate your opinions and feedback, so please try to be specific. Thank you!

1. Expectations:

When you came to I.L.I., what did you expect to learn?

Did you do what you wanted? Please comment.

2. Motivation:

Did you speak in class when you needed to?	YES	NO	SOME
Did you do the assigned homework?	YES	NO	SOME
Did you try to use what you learned in class when you were not in school?	YES	NO	SOME
Were you on time for class?	YES	NO	SOME
How often were you absent from class?	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	NEVER

What else did you do to help yourself?

3. Your Instructor:

Did you understand your teacher when he/she spoke?	YES	NO	SOME
Did you understand why your teacher chose classroom activities?	YES	NO	SOME
Could you talk with your teacher about problems or concerns you had?	YES	NO	SOME

4. Class atmosphere:

Did you enjoy spending time with other students? YES NO SOME

How much time did you spend speaking your first language? NONE SOME LOTS

Please comment on the class atmosphere in general? ______________________________

5. Class:

A How much improvement have you made?
B What were the most useful activities that helped you?

A Grammar: LITTLE SOME LOTS
B ______________________________

A Vocabulary: LITTLE SOME LOTS
B ______________________________

A Pronunciation LITTLE SOME LOTS
B ______________________________

A Speaking ability: LITTLE SOME LOTS
B ______________________________

A Listening: LITTLE SOME LOTS
B ______________________________

A Reading: LITTLE SOME LOTS
B ______________________________

A Writing: LITTLE SOME LOTS
B ______________________________

6. Culture:

Did you learn more about American culture? What helped you? ______________________________

Did you learn more about the cultures of students in the class? YES NO A LITTLE

What helped you? ______________________________

7. Last comments:
What do you think about the program in general? ______________________________

Reflecting on the Links Between Literacy Practices and Community Development

by
Judy Hofer
and Pat Larson

The Literacy Project:
Ware Adult Education Center
North Quabbin Adult Education Center

Learning to work collaboratively with shared visions and goals is at the heart of people building better futures for themselves and their communities. Adult learning centers can foster the skills, awareness, knowledge, and experiences of working together effectively. Through group classes, management committees, potlucks, and community activities, learners may have the opportunity to problem solve, offer their opinions, make decisions, advocate, and listen to others of different backgrounds. As individuals experience being listeners and being heard, they become more willing and able to advocate on their own behalf outside the four walls of the classroom, be it with spouses, landlords, employers, teachers, neighbors, or politicians.

Many assessment tools used in literacy programs, even those which educators call alternative, usually focus on how to assess where students are in terms of their goals. Checklists and portfolios aim to give feedback to students and teachers about how students' reading, writing, and numeracy skills have improved. While we have found these helpful, both of us have recognized that these accomplishments are not what make us feel passionately about our work.

We get our energy for continuing as practitioners in the field when we see Mary take the initiative to make coffee for everyone when just months before she was so shut down that she did not speak unless a teacher directly asked her a question. She began huddled within herself; now she gives us a hard time for not writing in our own journals. Or we look at Fred who started our program saying nervously that he hoped he could get a private tutor; now he participates on the long range planning committee. And Diane responds that the most valuable thing she learned from the other students in our creative writing class is that "it's our differences that make it exciting and our similarities that make it safe."

Or we might take some excerpts from Annette's essay. It has virtually nothing to do with how much better her writing is. Rather it has everything to do with what she has learned about herself and others:

"There are two kinds of people. The ones that go out and read and write. Have the ability to handle anything that comes their way. Not afraid to do it. They have the confidence they need.

"There are also people that stay back in a closet. That can't come out or are afraid to. But sometimes we see a little light in the dark. We are looking for more light. When we do we find it very interesting. We found out that we too have a very good mind and feelings about things.

"I found out there are many intelligent people in the dark closet after all. Have the same confidence. We need to come out of that dark closet. The light we see feels so good."

We need more of it. It's like being blind and you can see.

We lack indicators to measure this type of growth. In fact, these measures of an awareness that working class people also create knowledge, of increased confidence, feeling greater control over one's life, participating in groups and taking on leadership roles are actually trivialized because we measure our students' progress in terms of narrowly-defined goals. Many participants in adult education come to us feeling they are failures, and that we the experts will fill up their empty minds with what they need. We want to set forth right from the start that people coming to an adult education program must take an active role in their own learning, and that working within a group will enhance that process.

Many participants in adult education come to us feeling they are failures, and that we the experts will fill up their empty minds with what they need. We want to set forth right from the start that people coming to an adult education program must take an active role in their own learning, and that working within a group will enhance that process.

COMING TOGETHER AS A GROUP

Very few of our participants have experienced being part of a group that shared a sense of purpose. In rural, dying mill towns of Massachusetts, with virtually no public transportation, few jobs, no community centers, and limited access to social services, getting a GED and improving reading and writing skills barely scratch the surface of what is needed for people to get out of poverty and exercise more control over their lives.

What is desperately needed is to provide participants with the opportunities, knowledge and skills to work together cooperatively, imaginatively, with critical analyses and tools for problem-solving. Recognition of the value of this type of group building is growing in the business world, with quality circles, leadership development, and the valuing of being a "team player." Yet where does it enter adult learning centers? And even if these goals are explicit in our mission, how do we articulate these to participants, influence their own goals for themselves, assess progress in these areas, and move forward to then bring the larger community into the classroom and the classroom out to the larger community?

As we work with Component 3, we are attempting to develop language to "look back" and not only assess individual progress but also to assess what people do as a group/community — part of the continuum of literacy development for a community. This is one reason why it seems important to discuss how to assess not only what people do as individuals but also with groups.

CREATING TOOLS TO MEASURE COMMUNITY, TOO

Although literacy practices and community development may be difficult to measure in the traditional sense of assessment and testing, there may be indicators which show how an adult education center views community development and collaborative group efforts. The way we began this reflection was to frame the discussion in terms of such general questions as:

1. How can we develop alternative assessment tools which look beyond the "deficit model" of what should an individual be doing differently to one which looks at a person's place in their community, whether the classroom, the adult education center, their family, their neighborhood, or their town?

2. How do we assess improvement and change as a continuous process not only for the individual but for the community of individuals?
3. How does a program establish a strong link between the community, its program, and the participants in a program?
4. How does a program meet participants' personal goals while considering the needs of a community? How can we assess the value of both of these coming together so that a program achieves more "of its goals more often and more efficiently"? (Stein)
5. How do we assess if there is movement or change on a continuum in terms of community development by people participating in programs and by the program? (Stein)
6. How do we assess people's movement from individual goals to group goals and collective activity? What has to happen to allow for such movement?
7. How do we bridge looking at how individuals function in a group and develop along a continuum to the idea of community development and collective action?
8. In order to assess community development, how do we define leadership development? (Fingeret)
9. How do we assess collective activity of a group with the group rather than just assessment with individuals?
10. How do we develop a language of assessment which takes into account the development of community and collaborative efforts at adult education centers which also speaks to the needs of funders?

Answering all the above questions is beyond the scope of this discussion paper. And some of the possible answers may be found only through what Janet Isserlis describes as "the interactive, dynamic, dialogic roles of both teachers and learners" in the on-going assessment of daily classroom activities and other center and community activities" (*Adventures in Assessment, Vol. 2*).

In the *Framework for Assessing Program Quality* compiled by Sondra Stein for the Association for Community-Based Education, Stein points out a growing need to assess the ways we work in groups in terms of problem-solving. Team problem-solving is growing in a number of jobs to replace the model of workers being individual cogs in a wheel. Thus, participants in adult education programs may need and want experiences in "team efforts". Stein says, "Instead of looking solely at learners and trying to figure out what they need to do differently if we are unhappy with program results, we should also look at the conditions and processes that lead to those results and try to figure out what the program needs to do differently."

By experiencing and participating in groups, people may come together around group projects such as community forums and other activities.

By experiencing and participating in groups, people may come together around group projects such as community forums and other activities. For example, Tawny, who came to The Literacy Project at the end of 1990 and earned her GED in a few months, returned to the Center in October, 1991 to begin volunteering as a tutor. Recently Tawny said that when she first came to the Center she only wanted to work alone and focus on getting her GED. "Now look at me. I am helping organize workshops, coordinating a newsletter for the Center, and getting the local selectperson to come to some of our NEXT STEPS meetings."

Other community projects such as organizing SHARE (a food buying program), publishing a community magazine, and starting a legal literacy program all grew out of discussions and dialogue which began in the classroom.

Other community projects such as organizing SHARE (a food buying program), publishing a community magazine, and starting a legal literacy program all grew out of discussions and dialogue which began in the classroom. The seed for the Legal Literacy and Advocacy Project which grew out of several different discussions during a nine month period, according to one of the advocates: "Somebody's welfare was cut off — an elderly student. There was no explanation. Welfare just said, 'That's it.' It was illegal, but she wasn't aware that it was. We decided to go about helping her."

After six months of asking questions and talking with Legal Service lawyers, two people started a legal literacy and advocacy project for people in the community. The group of four people who developed this project learned about keeping records and about dealing with various agencies. They also kept a journal of their activities through which they talked to each other about their experiences. One participant said she learned how carrying out a community project using teamwork is very different from the factory work she has experienced.

The stops and starts for such community projects illustrate that progress is not always linear, and that it takes time. For many people it may be recursive and cyclical with movement in and out of the private and public realms (Fingeret). For example, as we see Donna begin to speak in a group at the Center and break through the silence on an individual level, we also see the discussions in her class move toward community issues such as lack of jobs and lack of public transportation. In time, Donna wrote a letter to the local newspaper about the need for public transportation. At first it appeared that this was an isolated writing activity. But months later when nothing happened, Donna talked about the issue in a group again and began writing letters to public officials. She eventually organized a group meeting with the person directing the regional transit authority. Thus, there is movement and change both on the individual level and the collective level as a group comes together to speak out in the larger community. All this takes time.

For now, our challenge as educators and facilitators is to negotiate linking literacy practices to community development so that students — and staff — can benefit from a common sense of purpose.

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FIGURE 1

WARE ADULT EDUCATION CENTER
END OF CYCLE EVALUATION FOR WRITING GROUP

WHAT: This assessment tool is used to assess the individual's progress in group participation, learning from others n groups, and the mechanics and process of writing as well as to provide the teacher with feedback for the class.
HOW: At the end of the three-month writing group, each participant filled out this assessment form in our last class. First I read through the entire evaluation to clarify and answer questions. To respond to question #1, as a group, we brainstormed the qualities we felt were most important to us an a whole. From that list, indivdiuals chose their own qualities to reflect upon furher. After completing the form, we shared our responses with each other.
WHY: We used this form to assess ourselves, provide each other with feedback, and make recommendations for future groups.
WHEN: This is to be used as a summative assessment at the last class.
POPULATION: This tool is used in a mixed group with very beginning writers and others who are going on to community colleges.

1. List four qualities that you think are particularly important to participating in a group class.

2. Do you feel you have improved in these areas since being in this class?

3. What did you learn from the other students in the class?

4. Assess yourself in the following areas:

		Improvement		
Mechanics of Writing	Not at all	Somewhat	Quite a bit	A lot
1. Puncutation				
2. Spelling				
3. Grammar				
4. Organization: main idea, paragrphs, sentences				
Writing Process				
1. Ability to write creatively				
2. Writing becomes a part of my life				
3. Writring helps me understand myself better				
4. Carily of writing				
5. Can express what I want to say in writing				
6. Willingness to share writing				
7. Enjoyment of writing				
8. Fluidity of writing				

5. What other areas do you feel you've improved in? Expand on these and the above checklist.

6. Fill out the following paragraph:

Next time I'm in a class or group like this, I hope I...

7. What was your favorite part(s) of this class? Or what do you think was best about this class?

8. Fill out this paragraph, beginning:

Judy, the next time you offer this course, you should...

9. Please describe this course as if you were talking to a friend. Would you tell him/her to take it? Why or why not?

10. Any other comments, suggestions, thoughts?

11. Are you continuing into the next cycle? If yes, what would you like to see happen?

Analyzing Self Evaluation Checklists: A Starting Point for Dialogue

The Workplace Education Project of the Labor Education Center offers ESL, Pre-GED and GED classes in New Bedford and Fall River. Our students are primarily Portuguese, although some are Cape Verdean or Polish. About half our students are employed as stitchers or machine operators. Some work for small businesses and the number of unemployed students is rising.

Our program worked on alternative assessment in the GOALS Accountability Project, focusing on different options to document progress through portfolio assessment. In this process we revised our old assessment tools, and adapted and created new ones. We field-tested these tools and then discussed their usefulness for our particular group of learners and our project.

One of the tools in our portfolio is a progress checklist which we adapted from Janet Kelly's forms. *(Ed. note: see new mother Kelly's article on "blank blank," on page xx.)* To make the checklist suitable for second language learners, we based the items on our students' goals, as expressed over the last few years. The form asks learners to reflect on the frequency of their use of speaking, reading, and writing skills in various settings. Students can choose from "not yet", "a little", "sometimes", and "usually".

The progress checklist is two pages long and initially takes a long time to fill out. As students become more familiar with it, however, the process becomes quicker. Our program has multi-level classes and therefore the advanced students can usually help the beginners. Students complete this checklist every two to three months. We thought that this interval would make it more likely that learners would have made progress and that they would have noticed it themselves.

We expected this self-evaluation tool to show the students their improvements in English. This kind of self-assessment usually helps students think about their own progress and is also a step in taking responsibility for their learning. We expected to see general movement toward increasing use of English in most of the skill areas in most settings. This was not always the case, as the following example illustrates.

One student, Maria, completed the form on November 9, 1992. On all but the last skill Maria checked "a little". She felt that she didn't understand and couldn't use the conditional tense yet (Figure 1, next page).

Maria completed this form again on January 25, 1993. Usually students don't see their initial form before they complete a new one. This way they have to think about how they feel about their progress at that particular time (and not just replicate what they checked off last time). If we compare the responses from November to January, however, we see

by
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FIGURE 1

Name: Maria Date: 11-9-92	Usually	Sometimes	A Little	Not Yet
I read my writing to others.			✓	
I write answers after reading.			✓	
I understand when someone talks to me in English.			✓	
I can talk about what is happening now (present).			✓	
I can talk about what happened before (past).			✓	
I can talk about what will happen (future).			✓	
I can talk about what might happen (conditional).				✓

Name: Maria Date: 1-25-93	Usually	Sometimes	A Little	Not Yet
I read my writing to others.		✓		
I write answers after reading.		✓		
I understand when someone talks to me in English.			✓	
I can talk about what is happening now (present).		✓		
I can talk about what happened before (past).		✓		
I can talk about what will happen (future).		✓		
I can talk about what might happen (conditional).			✓	

FIGURE 2

Name: Carlotta Date: 11-9-92	Usually	Sometimes	A Little	Not Yet
I speak English with my friends at work.			✓	
I speak English with my supervisor.				✓
I speak with my union representative in English.				✓
I speak English with my family.			✓	
I speak English at the store.		✓		
I speak English at the doctor's office.				✓
I speak English with my neighbors.				

Name: Carlotta Date: 1-25-93	Usually	Sometimes	A Little	Not Yet
I speak English with my friends at work.				✓
I speak English with my supervisor.				✓
I speak with my union representative in English.				✓
I speak English with my family.		✓		
I speak English at the store.			✓	
I speak English at the doctor's office.		✓		
I speak English with my neighbors.		✓		

Maria felt that she made progress in all but one category. Looking at grammar, she now feels she uses the tenses "sometimes" rather than "a little". For the conditional tense, she feels she is now using it "a little" as opposed to not at all. She doesn't feel that she understands English any better.

After completing the form in January, Maria looked at her form from November to realize she felt she was making progress. Maria's progress checklists confirmed our expectations. Half the class displayed response patterns similar to Maria's.

The responses of the other half of the class, however, didn't change with time in the anticipated way and puzzled us. Carlota is one example from this group (Figure 2). Her form from November 9, 1992 shows that she speaks with her friends at work "a little" but not with her supervisor or her union representative. She also speaks "a little" with her family in English but only "sometimes" at the store and never at the doctor's. She didn't check off at all how frequently she talks to her neighbors.

Carlota filled out this form again at the end of January. Most of her ratings stayed the same. For example, she still doesn't speak to her supervisor or her union representative. She moved from "a little" to "not yet" concerning speaking with friends at work. However, this time she says she speaks with both her neighbors and the doctor "sometimes". She also feels she is speaking English more with her family.

FORCING US TO RECONSIDER

Examining the inconsistent results, my colleagues and I reconsidered the value of this tool. Our dissatisfaction stemmed from the differing response patterns we saw in some students' forms and that we had difficulty in interpreting. Our main question was: Is it important that students move in a linear progression in their language acquisition or English usage? If we are going to use a subjective tool, shouldn't we accept all subjective responses? What could we learn from students' self-perceptions of their progress? Our conversation reinforced and strengthened our conviction that we valued knowing how the learner felt about his or her progress. We decided, however, that we also needed to probe deeper into the reasons for the responses that indicated a lack of progress.

Our main question was: Is it important that students move in a linear progression in their language acquisition or English usage?

Going back to the classroom, I talked to Carlota about her form and this conversation clarified some of her responses. Her increase in talking to the doctor from "not yet" to "sometimes" was a reflection of the changed family situation. One of her family members had some serious health problems and she had to accompany him to the doctor's office often. If I had known this, I could have introduced more health-related material into the class or could have had her work on it individually. Carlota doesn't speak to her supervisor or union representative in English because they are Portuguese. Her job in a predominantly Portuguese-speaking workplace makes it harder for her to use English in that setting. In retrospect, she and I could then have reflected on how she feels about this situation. If she had preferred to speak more English at work, we could have thought about some strategies to do so. We could also

Knowing how learners feel about their progress enables us to find a meaningful starting point for dialogue. If big gaps exist between their perceptions of their abilities and ours, then it is important to "dig deeper" into the "why."

have concentrated on how she could practice her English in other settings.

Knowing how learners feel about their progress enables us to find a meaningful starting point for dialogue. If big gaps exist between their perceptions of their abilities and ours, then it is important to "dig deeper" into the "why." For example, the most advanced student in my ESL class consistently rates herself very low. I hope it is helpful for her to compare her subjective ratings with other more objective measures to see that she is progressing. Knowing how she feels about her language development, I can make sure that I point out to her specifically and often the gains she is making. More importantly, I need to involve her more consciously in identifying progress in her reading and writing since these are her strongest skill areas. Ultimately, only she can convince herself of her progress but I hope that these dialogues about our different perceptions could contribute to a better self-image of herself as a learner.

In contrast to the above student, I had another learner in my class who rated himself consistently high with this tool, even from the beginning of the class. He checked off "usually" for most of the settings and skill areas. Although his spoken English was rather fluent, my assessment of his reading and writing skills did not show the same skill level he felt he had. So far, I have not figured out how to discuss our different perceptions. I know this will be necessary for him to adequately understand where and how he needs to work on reading and writing.

IS PROGRESS ALWAYS LINEAR?

Initially, we assumed that progress would be a linear movement from lower to higher English usage in all skill areas and in all settings. Now we see that progress is not linear but rather moves in jumps and starts and is based on the contextual conditions. For example, you can't expect an increase in speaking English with your supervisor if your supervisor speaks the same language you do. You can expect a change in speaking English at the doctor's if there is an increased need to do so.

We need more experience using this checklist, especially involving students, to develop its potential. But it is clear that to interpret the results of this tool, additional dialogue with students is required. In fact, the dialogue which emerges from this process is probably the most important outcome of this tool.

☑

Reflections on On-going Assessment: Documenting Self-Esteem and More

...To have good dreams when everyone has the same chance to grow, to learn, and to love... To have good dreams that instead of just giving people material things, we also teach them to help themselves...To have these good dreams but most of all to see all these good dreams come true for all.

Pat L.F., Sharing Our Thoughts

In the summer of 1991, Pat came to class. She was a very timid, anxious woman who told me she had recently been laid off and wanted a GED to help improve her chances of finding work. She asked if she could meet with an individual tutor since groups made her nervous. I explained that our program could not provide this service but invited her to observe a class. Although she was hesitant, she did sit in the back of the room and watch.

Pat came to the next class and joined us at the table. She listened intently and at times seemed as though she wanted to speak. After a few more sessions, Pat began to participate in classes. Within a few months, she was an active member of the group and was encouraging others in their efforts to learn. Since that evening two years ago, Pat has moved from the Pre-GED to the GED class, has had three pieces published in *Sharing Our Thoughts*, the SABES southeast learner-generated magazine, has worked with a group of five learners to write and produce a book about environmental issues, and has presented her work to a group of learners and teachers who were interested in doing similar projects. Most recently, Pat attended a Student Advisory Board meeting to make decisions about the classes and the project.

While Pat's development of self-esteem and sense of community are apparent from her accomplishments and conversations we have had, I am troubled by the fact that the assessment tools and procedures used in our program do not reflect these achievements adequately back to the learner. This concern was highlighted for me when Pat recently experienced personal problems which prompted her to consider leaving class. As she struggled with family issues and missed quite a bit of class, I tried to convince her that she had come too far to give up on her goal of passing the GED test. As I turned to her reading and writing folders and journals, I felt that I did not have enough tools to reflect her progress and to encourage her to persist. I became disillusioned with the assessment tools and procedures we had been using and began to question whether the tools were truly providing information which is important. I wondered how they could be revised to offer more pertinent

by
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and Pat F.

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data or even whether they should be discarded.

Fortunately, Pat did return to class after working out some of her problems. I was determined to discuss this matter of assessment with Pat and the other members of class to learn how they feel about the various tools we use to assess progress. In particular, I wanted to know if the folders and journals demonstrate progress towards reaching individual goals. I wanted to learn how we could use these folders and journals more effectively or if we should use them at all. I also hoped to learn if Pat and the others felt they were making progress and how they knew when they were progressing. Finally, I hoped to measure the development of a community in the class and to discover ways to record increased self-esteem.

> *I suspected Pat would value this tool because she is a prolific writer and uses the folder faithfully to store work and to order drafts. She confirmed this by noting that the writing folder "is a good idea. It lets the teacher know how much we can do and understand."*

ASSESSING OUR ASSESSMENT TOOLS

In this article, I focus on Pat's experience to represent my general dissatisfaction with the assessment procedures we use.

In the pre-GED and GED classes, teachers and learners periodically set learning goals and assess progress. Presently, this on-going assessment involves four components.

Writing Folder:
♠ Topics to Write About
♠ Writing Skills
Reading Folder:
♠ Reading Progress Checklist
♠ Reading Log
Student Journal
Teacher Log

Writing Folders. Each student in the class keeps his or her writing in a writing folder. *Topics to Write About* and *Writing Skills* forms are also included. I attempt to meet with each learner monthly to discuss the contents of the form. In reality, our conferences usually occur every other month.

During the conference, the student and I review his or her self-assigned writing goals. Students' goals are often to master specific writing skills such as revising after writing a first draft or editing run-on sentences. Sometimes the goals are more personal such as writing a letter to a friend. Together we determine whether the goals were met or if more work is required. If the goals were accomplished, new writing goals are set. During this meeting, we also look at samples of the learner's writing.

I suspected Pat would value this tool because she is a prolific writer and uses the folder faithfully to store work and to order drafts. She confirmed this by noting that the writing folder "is a good idea. It lets the teacher know how much we can do and understand." This answer was surprising for I had always intended the folders to be used by learners to track their own progress. When I mentioned this to Pat, she said that "the folders do let us know how far along we're getting. It lets me know I'm making progress because I am doing more skills." She added that looking at all of the drafts in the folder reminded her that "I did get to write quite a bit." She then added that she enjoys reading my individualized responses to her work, which include compliments, questions, and suggestions for revision. She said that she likes to know what she is doing well and the areas that she personally needs to address.

From our discussion, I realized the value of reviewing the contents of the folder regularly and became determined to have writing conferences on a more consistent, monthly basis. I found that I had a good sense of the progress the learners were making because I reviewed and responded to much of their writing. It is necessary to have more conferences however, so the students become more comfortable with using the writing folder as a tool to help them measure their own progress. During the conferences, they will have more time to review their old writing and compare it to newer work. This will allow them to better observe their own progress and to identify their strengths and weaknesses. It became clear to me that the folders can serve a useful purpose, but adequate time for review is essential.

I found that I had a good sense of the progress the learners were making because I reviewed and responded to much of their writing. It is necessary to have more conferences however, so the students become more comfortable with using the writing folder as a tool to help them measure their own progress.

Reading Folders. *Reading Progress Checklists* and *Reading Logs* are included in the Reading Folder. Again, learners are supposed to meet on a monthly basis with me to review progress and to discuss their reading experiences. Reading goals are reviewed and if the learner has met his or her goals, new ones are established. The checklist we use was adapted from one developed by Janet Kelly from Read/Write/Now (see *Adventures in Assessment*, Volume 1). Learners may also record material they read in or out of class which is of particular interest or importance to them.

When meeting with Pat, I asked why she had not used this folder as regularly as the writing folder. Pat responded that she still couldn't do all the reading strategies and that some were confusing.

Listening to Pat, I was reminded of a comment Susan Lytle made at a workshop I had recently attended. She asked, "Where did these objectives come from on the checklists?" I realized that I had determined that these reading strategies were important for comprehension and I emphasize them in instruction. I had not asked the learners to develop this list of strategies with me, however, and therefore risked asking them to measure themselves against objectives which may not be realistic goals for them or which simply may not be their goals.

In the future, I will introduce a new reading comprehension strategy and ask learners to experiment with it for a couple of weeks. I will then ask them to reflect on whether the strategy is useful for them and to determine whether this strategy should be included in their personal checklists. It is also my intention to work with learners to reflect more on what helps them to comprehend what they read and to develop more individualized reading goals.

When I asked Pat if this folder was at all useful, she said that "It's good to have these charts. It lets the instructor see what's going on and how far they're going." Again, I was struck by the fact that she viewed the reading folder as a tool to be used by the teacher. She did not seem to realize that she could gain useful information from reviewing it as well. When we reviewed two progress checklists, one from January and one from March, she observed that "I can see I'm making progress. These folders are good if students get to check back on old papers." This comment highlighted a major concern I have had when using the reading folder. Because I believed that the students should keep the folders with them to review their own progress, I asked them to use the folders at home and to bring them to class. Frequently when it was time for reading conferences, however, students would have left their folders at home. They would complete a new *Progress Checklist* but would not have past data with which to compare their answers. I would remind them to review the folder at home or to bring it to the next class, but this did not always happen. As in the case of Pat, I realized I had not adequately assisted her in reviewing the data which demonstrated her progress and became determined to allot more time for this analysis. After discussing this issue with my colleagues during a staff meeting, I have decided to keep all folders in class so that when we have conferences, the students and I can review all important information. I will explain to them that they have access to the folders at all other class times during the month. (If we had a copier on site, I could duplicate all forms so students could keep one and I could file one.)

I gain valuable information from reading journal entries. I learn when materials or learning methods were useful and when students feel they need more review. I also get insight into the personal lives of the students so that I better understand their goals, interests, and difficulties.

Student Journals/Logs

I just thought I would look into this program to what it was all about. I don't know what will come of this...to learn for me has always been hard...

Pat (journal entry, 7/91)

Students write about a wide range of topics in their journals. Some write about personal issues while others reflect on their learning experiences in class. They write about what they understood and what they need to practice. They also comment on learning strategies that were useful and those they didn't like. Students write with the understanding that I will respond to the entry but will not correct it. They write in their journals at the end of every class for approximately five to ten minutes.

Pat is now working on her fourth journal. She said that her journal provides "good (writing) practice and keeps communication open. Students can let teachers know about the night's class and what was interesting or hard."

I agree with Pat's assessment of the strengths of journals. I gain valuable information from reading journal entries. I learn when materials or learning methods were useful and when students feel they need more review. I also get insight into the personal lives of the students so that I better understand their goals, interests, and difficulties.

I enjoyed it when the class works together... I think in this way we get the help we need...It was nice to see my writing again... I hope others enjoy them as I did putting them down on paper...

Pat (journal entry, 5/11/92)

Teacher Log/anecdotal reporting

We reviewed writing folders today and once again I was troubled by their use...some use them to organize and set goals...others have not been using them to organize their drafts. I have to take some of the blame because we have not reviewed them for a while...As I write this, everyone is consulting each other for spelling and word usage for their own journals. This group helps each other and relies on each other more than they ask me for help.

Eileen (teacher log, 5/24/93)

For the past five months. I have been keeping a teacher log. I make my entries while the rest of the class write in their journals. In the log, I describe the day-to-day events of the class. I record GED test scores, breakthroughs in understanding, and comments and suggestions students make about the class. I also try to record anything students tell me that reflects on their progress or difficulties.

When I asked Pat whether she thought she was progressing, she responded, "Sometimes. I need confidence. When I look at folders I feel confident but it's different going for the test." She is very concerned she will not have enough time to complete the exam. She did feel that she could see progress when she looked at the papers she does in class and when she corrects them. She added, "I still have a hard time with those maps and charts!"

Pat reflected on specific times that she knew she was learning. When remembering the time spent collaborating with others to write the environmental book, she said, "It was nice to work as a group with my fellow students. We shared ideas and were enthusiastic." When I asked her how it felt to offer a workshop to other teachers and students, she said, "That was different! If we were able to explain to others and get our message across, it means we all learned together." She described having her work published in *Sharing Our Thoughts* as "...a miracle! I couldn't get over it. Seeing it in a book, I must have made some progress!"

The importance of recording these types of comments is obvious to me. This is the data which reflects development of self-esteem while also noting hesitations and self-doubt. It is my hope that by recording segments of conversations with students, over time, I will gather a true reflection of their views of themselves as learners. I recently learned of a teacher who leaves her log on her desk for students to read. Learners get to know what observations the teacher thinks are important and receive reinforcement about their progress and work in class. I plan to make my log available so that, just as with the other assessment tools, the log is not a device for a teacher to measure a student's progress, but a method through which learners can assess their own growth.

Community Development

When examining the assessment tools for this article with Pat, I asked her how we could measure community development. She became highly animated and said, "You have to have more (than studying GED subjects). Young kids just don't go to class to study but to talk to each other, express opinions, and have a laugh or two...a lot have left but originally we had a community and friendship. I was going through some old papers the other day and thinking of those I knew who left and felt so blue and really empty inside. We formed some kind of friendship with people we never knew. We shared times trying to learn. We said our opinions. When something was new or hard we taught each other. Sometimes we laughed together and sometimes we got upset with each other, but that's how it was. We shared good and bad times...It's hard that the group is moving on but it made me think that I should try again."

I asked Pat how we could measure community development. She became highly animated and said, "You have to have more (than studying GED subjects). Young kids just don't go to class to study but to talk to each other, express opinions, and have a laugh or two...a lot have left but originally we had a community and friendship.

Pat highlighted the value of teaching and learning from each other, supporting each other, and developing a sense of responsibility towards each other. Her sadness at students leaving and the inspiration she gained from their success reinforced my belief in the importance of learners returning to the class as tutors to remain part of the community and to serve as inspiration to others.

Pat's views confirmed my belief in the importance of developing community. She highlighted the value of teaching and learning from each other, supporting each other, and developing a sense of responsibility towards each other. Her sadness at students leaving and the inspiration she gained from their success reinforced my belief in the importance of learners returning to the class as tutors to remain part of the community and to serve as inspiration to others. I also realized that Pat uses language that expresses a sense of commitment to the groups and the project such as "fellow students" and "taught each other." In the future, it will be important to record this language and to trace, over time, how and when learners use it. Mostly, however, I still feel frustrated by my limited attempts to measure what I believe is the key to learning. I will continue to look to learners and other colleagues for ways in which to measure this progress.

I am grateful to Pat for agreeing to discuss these issues with me and to collaborate on this piece. I am in the process of discussing similar questions with the rest of the group. What I learned from our discussions is that we need to talk about and reflect more on assessment in class. We need to have more frequent conversations about learning moments and more time together to analyze the data gained from these checklists. The danger of using only teacher-generated checklists has become more clear to me. I am still uncertain about the best ways to document the development of self-esteem and community, but I do feel that my teacher log will play an important part. Most importantly, I will ask learners for feedback about the tools we use. Their insights help me to realize just who this information is for and for what purposes.

When I asked Pat if there was anything I could do to motivate her to continue to come to class and to feel confident enough to take the GED tests, she said, pointing to her heart, "No, it has to come from in here." I believe this most eloquently expresses the need for learners to be in charge of assessing themselves and monitoring their own progress.

☑

WRITING SKILLS

Writing Skills That I Do Well	Date	Skills I Need to Practice	Date

READING PROGRESS CHECKLIST

Reader: ______________________________ Date: ______________

	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Not Yet
1. I understand what I read in class				
2. I understand what I read outside class.				
3. I talk about what I read in class.				
4. I think about what I already know before I read.				
5. I think about what I already know as I read.				
6. I ask myself questions as I read.				
7. In my own mind, I say what I read in my own words				
8. If I don't know a word, I use the words around it to guess what it means.				
9. If I don't know a word, I think about how the letters sound and "sound it out."				
10. I slow down if the reading is hard or spped up if the reading is easy.				
11. After I read, I think about what I read and think if I agree or disagree.				

How has your reading improved?

____

____

____

What do you need to work on?

____

____

____

____

____

____

TOPICS TO WRITE ABOUT

Title	First Draft	Second Draft	Finished

READING LOG

Title	Date	Comments

READING PROGRESS CHECKLIST

Reader: P. L. F.

Date: 6-30-93

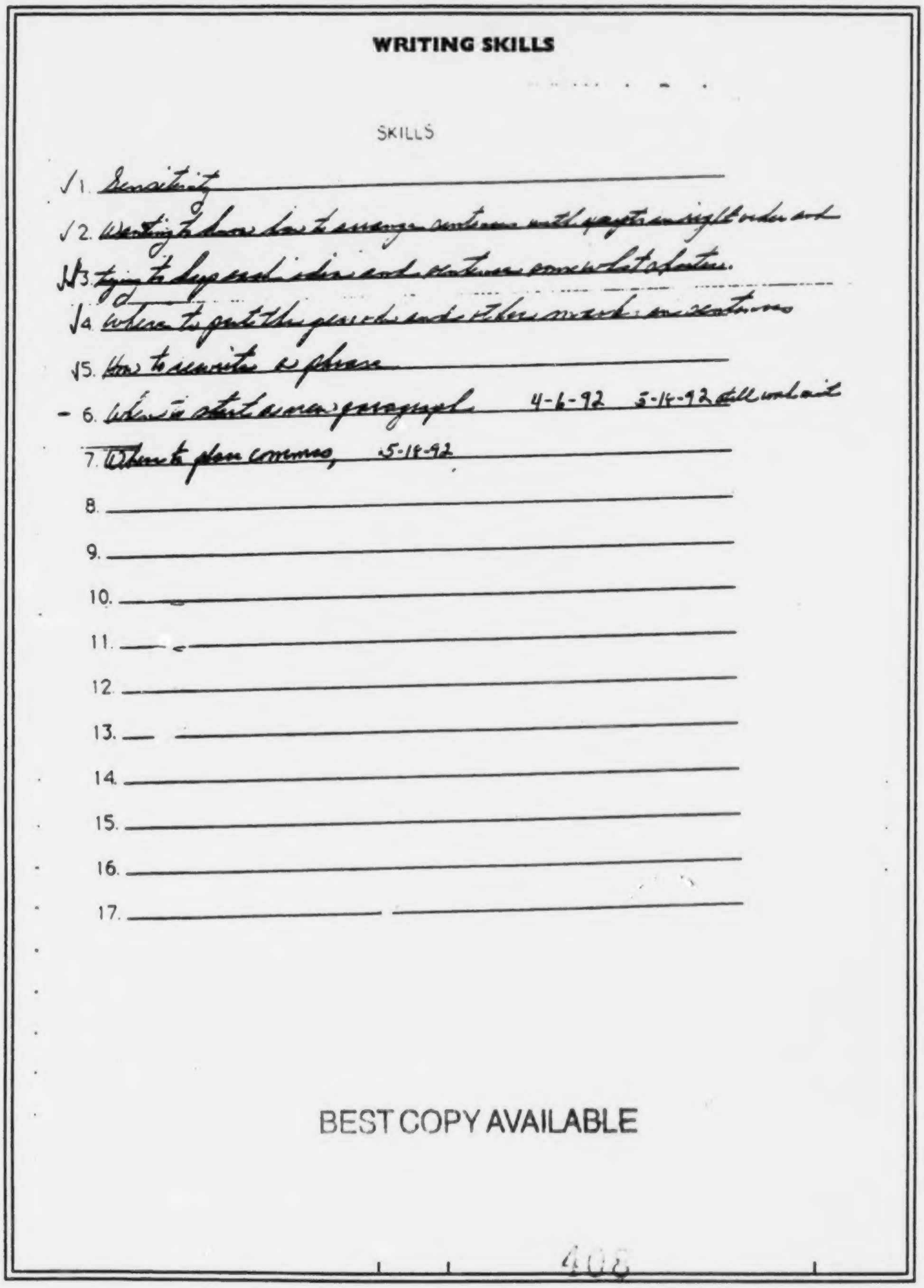
	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Not Yet
1. I understand what I read in class	✓			
2. I understand what I read outside class.		✓		
3. I talk about what I read in class.	✓			
4. I think about what I already know before I read.	✓			
5. I think about what I already know as I read.	✓			
6. I ask myself questions as I read.				✓
7. In my own mind, I say what I read in my own words		✓		
8. If I don't know a word, I use the words around it to guess what it means.		✓		
9. If I don't know a word, I think about how the letters sound and "sound it out."			✓	
10. I slow down if the reading is hard or spped up if the reading is easy.	✓			
11. After I read, I think about what I read and think if I agree or disagree.		✓		

How has your reading improved?

Hope some what better

What do you need to work on?

(everything)



WRITING SKILLS

SKILLS

√1. Sensitivity

√2. Wanting to know how to arrange sentences with paragraphs in right order and

√√3. trying to keep each idea and sentence somewhat shorter.

√4. where to put the periods and other marks in sentences

√5. How to rewrite a phrase

- 6. When to start a new paragraph. 4-6-92 5-14-92 still unclear

7. When to place commas, 5-14-92

8.

9.

10.

11.

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15.

16.

17.

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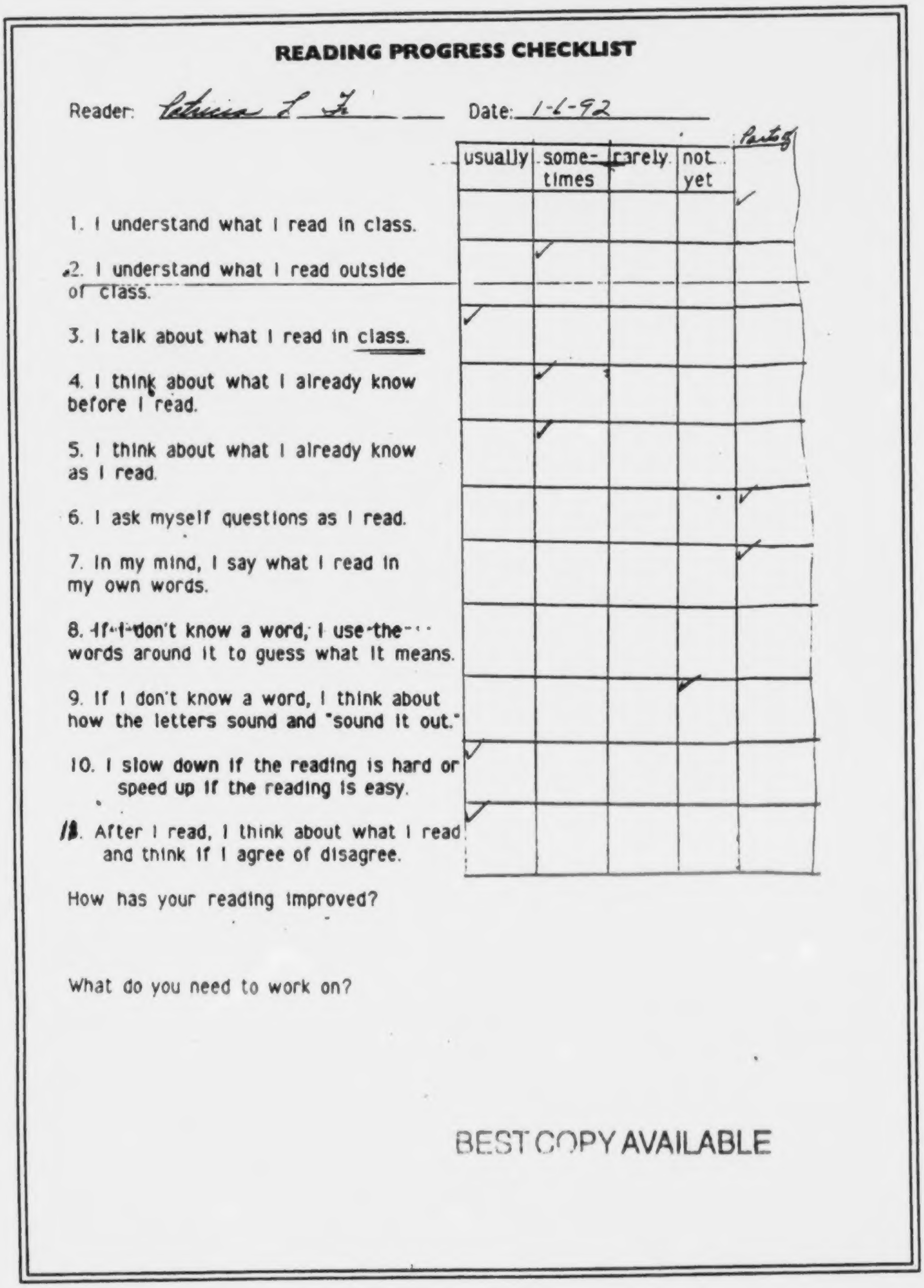


READING PROGRESS CHECKLIST

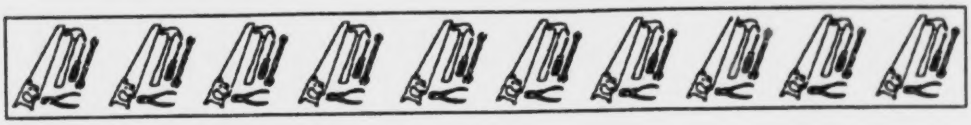
Reader: Patricia L. F. Date: 1-6-92

	usually	some-times	rarely	not yet	Parts of
1. I understand what I read in class.					✓
2. I understand what I read outside of class.		✓			
3. I talk about what I read in class.	✓				
4. I think about what I already know before I read.		✓			
5. I think about what I already know as I read.		✓			
6. I ask myself questions as I read.					✓
7. In my mind, I say what I read in my own words.					✓
8. If I don't know a word, I use the words around it to guess what it means.					
9. If I don't know a word, I think about how the letters sound and "sound it out."				✓	
10. I slow down if the reading is hard or speed up if the reading is easy.	✓				
11. After I read, I think about what I read and think if I agree of disagree.	✓				

How has your reading improved?

What do you need to work on?

BEST COPY AVAILABLE



TOPICS TO WRITE ABOUT

Title	First Draft	Second Draft	Finished
1. Mothers Love to Her Son	8-5-91	9-9-91	9-12-91
2. My Car	9-15-91		
3. Making Floral Arrangements	9-15-91	10-10-91	
4. The Condition of the Work Place	9-17-91		

Book Review

It Belongs to Me: A Guide to Portfolio Assessment in Adult Education Programs

by
Steve Reuys

Adult Literacy Resource Institute/
SABES Boston
Regional Center

It Belongs to Me: A Guide to Portfolio Assessment in Adult Education Programs, by Hanna Arlene Fingeret

For educators at all levels who are dissatisfied with standardized tests as the primary or sole means of student evaluation, and who are exploring various paths in what's come to be called "alternative assessment," the use of portfolios and portfolio assessment is one of the major options. Yet the concept of portfolios is not always clearly understood, and many practitioners who are interested may have questions about how to implement this approach.

Hanna Arlene Fingeret, a well-known adult educator who works with the Literacy South organization in Durham, North Carolina, was recently commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education to conduct a study of portfolio assessment in the world of adult literacy. *It Belongs to Me: A Guide to Portfolio Assessment in Adult Education Programs,* the result of this study, is "designed to introduce adult literacy educators to the concept of portfolio assessment, and to provide some guidance about how you can incorporate portfolio assessment into your work in adult literacy education." It provides a clear, succinct, and very useful introduction.

Fingeret conducted both an extensive literature review and a wide-ranging series of interviews with more than 50 students, teachers, administrators, staff developers, and other practitioners across the country who are using portfolios in their adult literacy teaching and learning. Quotations from these interviews pop up throughout the text and constitute an important feature of this guide—important because so much of the literature on portfolios has emerged from the K-12 or college contexts, while these quotes present voices from the field of adult literacy; important, too, because they ground the discussion in reality in ways that no summary of findings by an author can ever really do; and important because, while acknowledging the difficulties of implementing portfolio assessment, these practitioners and learners clearly demonstrate their enthusiasm for the use of portfolios and their words will encourage others to move forward into this area as well.

It Belongs to Me begins with a brief discussion of what is meant by the term "portfolio assessment." A portfolio is defined here as a selection of various materials that have been chosen from other, larger, on-going collections of materials related to a student's work and achievement, both inside and outside the classroom. All sorts of items could be included in portfolios—pieces of writing, written responses to reading, reading logs, daily work, checklists, special projects, to name a few of the possibilities. The distinction between the portfolio itself and the folders or other

The process by which students review their work, select certain items for inclusion in the portfolio, and then assess this collection is probably the crucial aspect of the whole approach as Fingeret describes it.

"containers" from which materials are chosen for the portfolio is an important one and is not merely a matter of semantics or simply an issue of quantity. The process by which students review their work, select certain items for inclusion in the portfolio, and then assess this collection is probably the crucial aspect of the whole approach as Fingeret describes it. The value of using portfolio assessment lies not just in its passive product—the collection of items representing various aspects of a student's work and achievement—but also in its active process, as a student gains valuable understanding of his/her own learning and accomplishments through selecting material for his/her portfolio and then assessing this portfolio collection itself. As writers Zessoules and Gardner note in an article on alternative assessment quoted by Fingeret, "No longer a weapon for rooting out and combating students' weaknesses, assessment becomes an additional occasion for learning."

Having looked at what portfolio assessment is (and isn't), Fingeret then takes readers through a cyclical, four-stage implementation process organized under the headings of 1) choosing, 2) planning, 3) implementing, and 4) evaluating and revising portfolio assessment. Stage One asks teachers who are thinking of trying portfolio assessment to begin by deciding whether portfolio assessment is consistent with their views of literacy, instruction, and assessment. Fingeret reviews the various ways in which literacy is seen in the U.S. at this time, the different approaches to adult literacy instruction that exist within the field, and the current issues surrounding the use of standardized tests vs. various types of alternative assessment in adult literacy. She notes that "portfolio assessment is compatible with instruction that approaches literacy as a process of constructing meaning, in a learner-centered way," but that "if you find that you support a more skills-based view of literacy, or that you see assessment as dependent on standardized test scores and the judgments of outside experts, then portfolio assessment will not be appropriate for your classroom or program."

Teachers who elect to embark on a voyage of portfolio assessment are then shown in Stage Two a five-step planning process in which they begin to make decisions about and start to develop:

♠ the focus for the portfolio assessment process (for example, writing, reading, math, everything) and how pertinent materials will be collected in an ongoing way in folders or other containers;

♠ the schedule by which students will review the material in their folders and develop their portfolios;

♠ the criteria to be used by students in selecting material for the portfolios;

♠ the process students will use in making choices and moving materials from folder to portfolio; and

♠ the criteria and process for assessing the contents of the portfolios on a periodic basis. Teachers are urged to work with and get support from other teachers while involved in this planning process (as well as during the other stages of portfolio assessment).

As one teacher says, "The fact that I met with four other staff members on a regular basis was extremely helpful. It kept us motivated and kept the momentum going of the pilot project.... Support is really important when you're piloting portfolio assessment." You can make this exploration a solo flight, but it's better to go with others.

Stage Three focuses on implementing portfolio assessment by following through on all the planning that was done in Stage Two. First, introduce the concept of portfolio assessment to students and encourage them to begin to think of portfolios as "an integral part of instruction." Students then continue on with this process—creating folders to collect materials, developing criteria for choosing materials to move from the folders to their portfolios, actually reviewing materials and making selections, and assessing the portfolios of assembled materials. Though usually based on the general guidelines developed by the teacher during the planning stage, the specifics of the portfolio assessment process will emerge out of a (probably on-going) process of reflection, negotiation, and decision-making by the students themselves, both individually and as a class.

Stage Four calls for teachers to evaluate the portfolio assessment process they have tried out and to make changes as needed. Since there is no perfect recipe for carrying out portfolio assessment and since it is seen as a cyclical process of reflection, planning, implementation, and evaluation, teachers may want to circle back to any of the previous stages before continuing on.

It Belongs to Me ends by stepping back to look at the impact of portfolio assessment on students and teachers, at the process of implementing portfolio assessment at the program level, and at what steps are needed to support the continued growth of portfolio assessment in adult literacy. There are also an appendix containing a few sample documents used by some programs in their portfolio assessment process and an annotated bibliography of materials dealing with portfolio assessment.

Part of the on-going message of this guide is that doing portfolio assessment isn't easy. It's usually not something that either teachers or students are accustomed to doing, and getting comfortable with the process can take some time. Gathering materials for folders is much easier in some areas (such as writing) than in others (such as oral language use). Various cultures may vary in how they regard the idea of individuals highlighting their own achievements. Reporting the results of portfolio assessment to funders, evaluators, and policy makers is not a simple process. Working conditions in the field are often not conducive to doing portfolio assessment, which requires sufficient time (for staff development, planning, and preparation) and sufficient space (for secure storage of folders and portfolios). Fingeret and her "commentators" do address all these issues. Yet, without minimizing the difficulties, they also make clear that doing portfolio assessment is worth it.

Summing up its impact, Fingeret says, "Portfolio assessment is practical and useful, according to the practitioners and students who participated in this project. It redefines the scope of assessment, and provides a way to look at personal development as well as academic skill growth as reflected in new literacy practices. It facilitates a

Summing up its impact, Fingeret says, "Portfolio assessment is practical and useful, according to the practitioners and students who participated in this project.

deeper level of reflection for students, and a deeper level of communication between students and teachers. It also promotes professional development and practitioner inquiry."

Here are a few brief quotes from some of the teachers, administrators, and staff developers who contributed to this project:

In all my experiences, students are really excited about portfolio assessment and they feel, 'This makes sense.'

It's empowering to students, and that's what I emphasize, how a portfolio helps students become independent learners and take responsibility for assessing their own work.

Portfolio assessment has minimized student attrition, and it seemed to keep staff better too. Portfolios help adults see where they're at and therefore they stay.... Portfolios value teacher judgment; by giving multiple choice standardized tests, the message is that nobody's judgment counts except for the test publisher.

When we did the share last year and people shared their portfolios there was a lot of pride.... With the portfolio the students saw exactly where they improved, they saw the kind of gain. People still talk to me about that.... They definitely want to continue with portfolio assessment.

With the portfolio the students saw exactly where they improved, they saw the kind of gain. People still talk to me about that.... They definitely want to continue with portfolio assessment.

Students, too, had positive things to say about the process. Lorna Irizarry, for example, is a student in New York, and it is from her words that the title for this report was taken. She says, "What I learned from my portfolio is that I've achieved what I wanted. I feel relaxed. It belongs to me. It's for me to know," and "Seeing my progress in the portfolio makes me know I can do the work."

There is, of course, no "one size fits all" set of specific instructions for how to set up and do portfolio assessment. How it works out for one program, one teacher, one group of students will vary a great deal from what happens in other places, at other times, with other people. And it's also important to remember that portfolio assessment isn't the only possible approach to take when embarking upon alternative assessment; many other ideas have been presented here in the various issues of *Adventures in Assessment* and elsewhere. Fingeret's guide, however, should provide a very helpful framework for teachers interested in trying out this particular approach.

Copies of *It Belongs to Me* can be obtained free of charge by writing to the Clearinghouse, Division of Adult Education and Literacy, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC 20202-7240; FAX (202) 205-8973.)

☑

Letter from the Field

The Case for Pre-Goal Setting

by
Don Robishaw

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Research Consultant
SABES Central
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Goal setting is a linear, future-oriented, individualistic, Western phenomenon which is not always transferable to English as a Second Language (ESL) learners from non-Western cultures and other domestic cultural contexts

Yet many educators in our field propose goal setting as the panacea to all learners' problems. Goal setting as an *activity* has been used in programs for a long time yet retention rates are still low. In this paper I propose a "pre-goal-setting" *strategy* as a panacea to some of the ills that goal setting activities do not address.

GOAL SETTING AS A MIDDLE CLASS PHENOMENON

I spent a number of years working overseas as an educator and also working as an educator with rural immigrants, refugees and Adult Literacy/Adult Basic Education (AL/ABE) learners in the United States.

I was born in a housing project, spent most of my life in the United States living in the inner city and avoided schooling as much as possible up to the age of sixteen. Based on those "growing experiences" (not negative experiences, as so often perceived and referred to by some adult education professionals) and from that perspective, I view goal setting as an strategy for motivating learning that is embedded with middle class values.

On its own, goal setting may not work well with many ESL learners who are economically disadvantaged, nor with individuals who grew up in an environment where it was not part of their value system. Goal setting is often taken out of context and transferred to individuals who may never have seen any concrete rewards for their own individual efforts or the efforts of groups to which they belong.

As a Western, middle-class activity, it works in that context primarily because there are numerous visible rewards. When people without positive role models, mentors or solidarity in a group (gang) do set goals, it is easier for them to "fall short" than to follow through with the necessary steps needed to achieve them.

"Success" in Adult Literacy/Adult Basic Education (AL/ABE) doesn't necessarily start with adults walking into a program and setting goals. Nor does it start with teachers expecting adult learners to be able to immediately be successful at using goal-setting.

Teachers should not assume that people with very different life experiences will proceed through classes as they themselves probably proceeded and succeeded through schooling and life.

A CASE FOR "PRE-GOAL-SETTING" AS PART OF A SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING STRATEGY

Adults in their everyday lives are motivated to learn many things. Some day it will become necessary for them to learn on their own in class. Learning on their own is important because many learners fear they cannot learn without the aid of a teacher or, even worse, that they can not learn at all. They must overcome this anxiety and develop self-confidence. Responsible adults need to take control of their own learning.

At the Read/Write/Now Program in Springfield Janet Kelly uses goal-setting as a small group learning strategy for learners with similar goals, such as obtaining a driver's license. These goals are identified from the student's goals list.

I agree that goal setting as a *strategy* can help some learners take control of their own learning and become motivated. But "pre-goal-setting" strategies must be designed and implemented to better help adults develop confidence in their own ability to use goal setting as a strategy for learning. (It is important to remember that these are strategies rather than activities, because the teachers must continue to pay close attention to the learners' important emotional and psychological processes as well as intellectual processes.)

I agree that goal setting as a strategy can help some learners take control of their own learning and become motivated. But "pre-goal-setting" strategies must be designed and implemented to better help adults develop confidence in their own ability to use goal setting as a strategy for learning.

Many learners need to participate in a "process" in order to find goal setting acceptable. Later I will recommend a strategy that may increase the chances of goal setting being more effective. But first it is important to understand that goal setting, as a strategy, is just a small step in one part of a whole Adult Education philosophy which is self-directed learning.

Self-directed learning can be divided into external and internal processes. Malcolm Knowles is perhaps best known for his understanding of the external processes:

> *...a process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes. (Knowles, M. 1975, p. 18).*

The criteria assume that a learner need only have the ability to learn on his/her own and to manage instructional activities. Educators who try to instill these skills in their learners may be assuming that the learners are aware and consciously prepared to accept them.

Another piece has often been either neglected or assumed in AL/ABE. This other side involves the *internal* changes needed to become, as Brookfield would point out, fully self-directed.

> *...self-directed learning is concerned much more with an internal change of consciousness than with the external management of instructional events. This consciousness involves an appreciation of the contextuality of knowledge and an awareness of the culturally constructed form of value frameworks, belief systems and moral codes that influence behavior and the creation of social structures. (Brookfield, S., 1985, p. 15)*

Adult learners need to reflect on their past life history and to sort through their experiences in order to see beyond their own formal schooling experiences in order to better develop, persist and continue with learning.

Some adult learners need to channel their former resistance to schooling into the persistence needed to become self-directed learners. A strategy might be to allow learners to reflect on how formal schooling made it more difficult for them as youths to accept the dominant cultural value system because of their lack of dominant "cultural capital" (assets) that their more well-off schoolmates had developed prior to beginning school. Rather than ameliorating this problem, schools did much to perpetuate the differences. Many learners resisted the dominant value system advocated by the schools.

After developing persistence they may then be able to make the behavioral changes necessary to accept goal setting strategies and even more important, self-directed learning. Learners need to discover alternatives through a "dialogical process" with their peers.

ACTIVITIES VS. STRATEGIES

This is one strategy in addition to other strategies mentioned in *Group Goal Setting Activities: An Approach from Youth Services Corps*, an article that appeared in the previous edition of *Adventures in Assessment*. The Youth Services Corps first suggested "activity" is a participatory group process that allows learners opportunities to self-reflect and to share their experiences through a dialogical pedagogy that respects learners as having valuable prior life experiences. Their first suggested "activity" is called "Thinking about Learning".

Their process begins with participation. I know little about the organization nor their retention rates. Although their "activities" may not be designed exclusively to prevent dropouts, I am curious to know if these suggested "activities" at all contribute to reducing their drop out rates.

My only problem is they refer to what they do as activities rather than strategies. There is a difference between goals, which should be addressed through a strategy and competencies, such as found on some reading skills and life skills checklists, which should be addressed through activities. *(See Janet Kelly's article in the first issue of* Adventures in Assessment.*)* Maybe this is only a semantics issue, but I hope in the future that they choose to call the wonderful things they do strategies rather than activities. Activities are fine for addressing competencies but it is better to choose strategies to address goals.

BEGINNING WITH THE INTERNAL PIECE

I also suggest a small group dialogical strategy to allow learners the opportunity to self-reflect and to share their reflections and experiences with their own cohorts. Dialogical pedagogy is participatory and respects the learners as adults with numerous valuable life experiences or, as Shor points out: "A participatory class begins with participation. A critical and empowering class begins by examining its subject matter from the students point of view and by helping students see themselves as knowledgeable people (Shor, I., 1992, p. 37). The facilitator creates an environment that respects the learners and allows the learners the freedom and

Some adult learners need to channel their former resistance to schooling into the persistence needed to become self-directed learners.

opportunity to grow and develop.

But what is often neglected by facilitators who use a dialogical pedagogy with AL/ABE learners is the need to first set and establish the ideal conditions for discourse before entering into a group discussion.

Another important aspect often neglected is the need for solidarity building between the participants and the facilitator. At the Read/Write/Now program,

"It is all part of the activities early in the class cycle. We usually have a group lesson/discussion on goal setting. We have also used readings from learners-written publications or oral histories which touch on educational experiences and life experiences that many learners can identify with as a starting place for analysis and discussion about where we have been, where we want to go, and how we can get there" (Kelly, J. 1991, P. 24).

Janet does a lot more at the Read/Write/Now Program in this area than most programs and I applaud her work and the same goes for the Youth Service Corps Program in Philadelphia.

Yet when it comes to developing solidarity it is very important that the facilitator has had similar life experiences and experiences with formal schooling as the learners. I can read, study and talk to a lot of people about breast cancer, battered women, alcoholism... but that doesn't qualify me to facilitate a discussion group made up of these victims. It is no different with Adult Literacy and Adult Basic Education learners.

CONCLUSION

Adult learners can benefit from programs which center on pedagogy that focuses on **participation, dialogue,** and **self-reflection** prior to engaging in goal-setting strategies or other aspects of external self-directed learning. In addition to increasing the chances that goal setting will work, the process will also help empower both learners and facilitators. Self-reflection is an important piece in Adult Education and teachers will also learn much about themselves and their practice through self-reflection.

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adventures in ASSESSMENT

Learner-centered approaches to assessment & evaluation in adult literacy

Volume 6

Responding to the Dream Conference

April 1994

Funded by the Massachusetts Department of Education

SABES

System for Adult Basic Education Support

SABES is the System for Adult Basic Education Support, a comprehensive training and technical assistance initiative for adult literacy educators and programs. Its goal is to strengthen and enhance literacy services and thus to enable adult learners to attain literacy skills. SABES accomplishes this goal through staff and program development workshops, consultation, mini-courses, mentoring and peer coaching, and other training activities provided by five Regional Support Centers located at community colleges throughout Massachusetts.

SABES also maintains an adult literacy Clearinghouse to collect, evaluate, and disseminate ABE materials, curricula, methodologies, and program models. Each of the five SABES Regional Support Centers similarly offers program support and a lending library. SABES maintains an Adult Literacy Hotline, a statewide referral service which responds to calls from new learners and volunteers. The Hotline number is 1-800-447-8844.

The SABES Central Resource Center, located at World Education, publishes a statewide quarterly newsletter, "Bright Ideas," and journals on topics of interest to adult literacy professionals, such as this volume of "Adventures in Assessment."

The first three volumes of "Adventures in Assessment" present a comprehensive view of the state of practice in Massachusetts through articles written by adult literacy practitioners. Volume 1, Getting Started, *included start-up and intake activities. Volume* 2, Ongoing, *shares tools for ongoing assessment as part of the learning process; Volume 3,* Looking Back, Starting Again, *focused on tools and procedures used at the end of a cycle or term, including self, class, and group evaluation by both teachers and learners. Volume 4 covered a range of interests. Volume 5,* Tale of the Tools *was dedicated to reflecting on component 3 tools of alternative assessment. Volume 6,* Responding to the Dream Conference, *was dedicated to responses to Volumes 1-5. Volume 7,* The Partnership Project, *highlighted writings from a mentoring project for practitioners interested in learning about participatory assessment. Volume 8 covered a range of topics from education reform to learner involvement in assessment. Volume 9 looked at assessment in a volunteer program, native language literacy, ESOL programs, and evaluations in workplace education programs.*

We would like to see your contribution, especially if you are doing native language literacy or low-level ESOL literacy. Contact editor, Alison Simmons, to discuss your submission.

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Learner-centered approaches to assessment & evaluation in adult literacy

Volume 6

Editor: Loren McGrail

Assistant Editor: Rick Schwartz

adventures in ASSESSMENT

April 1994

Final Reflections from Your Editor

Creating, Editing, and Producing the Dream Conference

by
Loren McGrail

Editor
SABES Central
Resource Center/
World Education

As a sometime adult literacy practitioner, particularly interested in alternative assessment, reading through all five issues of ***Adventures in Assessment*** *felt akin to attending a dream conference.*
Cathy Luna

It is spring and it is still snowing. The crocuses are shivering but Passover is here and Easter is around the corner. Getting this journal out the door and into the anonymous hands of practitioners around this state and all over the country feels a little more like a nightmare than a dream during this phase of the production cycle but the dream is still alive: the simple belief that a journal dedicated to writings on learner-centered or participatory approaches to assessment and evaluation written by and for practitioners will be of use.

This issue of *Adventures in Assessment* is the last issue that I will edit. The journal will continue to be published biannually by SABES. It is an issue primarily devoted to responses to the journal, all 5 volumes. The field is vast and wide. The authors in volume 6 include a doctoral candidate in a graduate school of education, an ESOL teacher in a community based program, a staff development facilitator, a tutor trainer, a state ABE director and the former assistant director of a national clearinghouse. I invite you to listen and drink in their thoughts and reflections, how and why they have used or adapted the tools they have or how they have used the journal's participatory principles and philosophy to guide their assessment adventures.

Before introducing each author to you, I would like to ask for your indulgence for a moment while I sing my swan song— reflect and do my own critical assessment of the five volumes and where I hope and think the journal should go in the future.

As stated already *Adventures in Assessment* is a field-based journal dedicated to writings on learner-centered or participatory approaches to assessment and evaluation. In my job as Literacy Specialist for SABES with the charge to provide technical assistance to adult literacy practitioners and programs, it was my belief that the field needed both a framework for investigating participatory approaches to assessment and a forum for expressing, sharing, and documenting ideas, tools, and questions. From the beginning these two strands were woven together into one cloth- "writing about it". Both were equally important; the it-learner-centered approaches to assessment and the writing- documenting inquiry.

"It"

Let me start first with "it', learner-centered or participatory approaches to assessment. From the beginning the journal was a way to reinforce and sustain energy my workshops on assessment had created- a way to get practitioners to talk and listen to each other across the state. The journal was a beginning point for the development of the toolkit of alternative assessment approaches and tools based on the three phases of the assessment process. And finally, the journal was an attempt to make real some of Susan Lytle's recommendations to the field of adult education (Lytle, 1988). Lytle stated that funders and legislators use standardized measurements to determine program accountability and effectiveness because they lack good information about the qualitative effects of programs on learner's lives. She advocated two basic strategies to remedy this situation: the first was to invite a wider participation into the conversation, thus, who better than the literacy practitioners themselves; the second was to conduct program-based practitioner research simultaneously across the country to strengthen these new conceptual frameworks and to exchange and critique innovative practices.

To start this process we needed a framework with clearly articulated guiding principles so that the word "alternative" didn't just mean anything other than standardized tests. As Susan Lytle (1989) said, "Constructing new images of adults- images built on assumptions of dignity and competence, of literacy as reflective and self-critical practice, and of learning as participatory — requires that we rethink or reconceptualize not only our notions of what counts as literacy but also our methods of inquiry- the processes we use to document and assess learning".

The following principles are a synthesis of the work of Lytle, Fingeret, and Auerbach, my mentors. The reader will note that they are also part of the Massachusetts Participatory Assessment Team's mission statement:

Principles of Participatory Assessment

1. It must be program-based and learner-centered.
2. It should help the learners achieve their goals.
3. It must build on learner strengths, not deficits.
4. It should be part of the learning experience.
5. It should not be a single procedure but a variety of procedures.
6. It should provide feedback that will lead to better instruction.

In addition to these principles, to engage in truly alternative assessment, we need to include learners as active participants at the center of the process of measurements as "co-investigators in determining their own literacy practices, strengths and strategies" (Lytle, 1988). As I stated in Volume II in talking about portfolio assessment, "If all we do is substitute new multiple measures for old standardized measurements and monitor student progress for diagnostic purposes in terms of identifying strengths and weaknesses in language and content areas, we will not have created a new paradigm."

To engage in truly alternative assessment, we need to include learners as active participants at the center of the process of measurements as "co-investigators in determining their own literacy practices, strengths and strategies."

Paradigm shifts are not easy. To support this shift we looked at the assessment process in three phases: 1.) Start Up or Intake Activities; 2.) Along the Way or On-going Activities; and 3.) Looking Back or End of Cycle Activities (Auerbach, 1992).

HISTORY OF THE JOURNAL

The journal began in the Fall of 1991. The intention from the beginning was to publish three journals devoted to the three phases of the assessment process. These journals were intended as guides, resources by and for practitioners to select and adapt tools for their own contexts.

These journals were intended as guides, resources by and for practitioners to select and adapt tools for their own contexts.

By volume II, in addition to introducing the authors, I asked the reader to think about the different "lenses" through which to view and analyze the writings. I posed questions for the reader to consider like "compare the evolution of the forms and tools Paul Trunnell developed for his ABE learners to the way Kathy Brucker developed her tools. How are the processes similar? How do they compare to the kind of anecdotal reporting Janet Isserlis does daily in her classroom? If progress is achieved, for whom is it achieved and by whom?" In retrospect, I see in these words the beginning of a shift in tone, a caution for people not to just adapt someone else's tool but to remember that first came the toolmaker- the context, then the tool.

In Volume III, Looking Back, I added three new features: What Counts? (math assessment), Voices From the Field (interviews, dialogues, or writings from practitioners who are not classroom teachers, and Letters.

I don't recall precisely when or who made the decision that the journal should continue beyond the original three. This fact leads me to believe the field had started to count on the journal as a sure thing so then we institutionalized it and said we could publish two a year- one in the fall and one in the spring. However, between Volumes III and IV the journal lost its production editor. This forced SABES to reconsider what kind of editorial support we needed. After much thought, we decided to hire an editor, Rick, with lots of editing, layout and graphic experience, but who was not an ABE practitioner. His task was to redesign the journal so its format was more consistent with and attractive and to do final edits with the authors. These decisions were made in part because the journal was gaining popularity outside the state and we were moving towards selling it. One of the design decisions was to do away with the appendices, which included all the forms and charts practitioners used. Though at first this seemed like a design decision, it really became a shift in what the journal was supposed to do for the field. By integrating the charts, forms, and graphs back into the author's piece we were hopefully sending the message that you can't just go out and take someone else's tool; you have to make it your own. In addition to these graphic changes, we included two articles from practitioners from out of state and a publication review.

WRITING

"...Loren asked me, reminded me, encouraged me, helped and revised with me."
Don Robishaw

"...It formalized a process that had been developing with much discussion, but little or no documentation... In some cases writing about the process we were using with a particular form codified something that didn't necessarily make much sense in practice. In others, the opposite took place-

something that didn't make sense became obvious in the process of writing about it. I was able to see it, or dump it altogether."
Janet Kelly

"We started with an initial chat, followed by a sharing of the forms and feedback and then a more extensive chat—"the diner dialogue" where Loren reviewed my work and sent back a framework for preparing and pairing it into an article."
Paul Trunnell

In addition to providing a framework and a forum for alternative assessment, I saw the creation of a field-based journal as a golden opportunity to put into practice a process approach to writing, a way for practitioners to experience first hand the power of having their writing responded to with non-evaluative feedback. Many of the authors in Lindy Whiton's research survey in this issue wrote about this experience.

In general I am not surprised by what these authors had to say about the journal and how it helped them reflect upon their practice. I am struck, however, by a few prevailing comments and sentiments. The first is embarassment over how important my asking, prodding, pleading was to get people to write. Comments like "She asked me" and "She asked me to submit" make me feel both a little uncomfortable with my persuasive abilities and at the same time assured me that without that initial push, many wouldn't have done it. The second is the power of what happens when you write something down. All the authors commented on the self knowledge they gained by the act of writing itself. I had underestimated the power of writing to reflect back to us what we really think and believe. And third, I was surprised to hear, repeatedly, the desire many authors expressed to connect with others so they could get feedback on their own practice— "I also thought other practitioners might think of improvements, and I learn from them."

I am also struck by some authors' clarity about the need to get this information out: "I want presentation portfolios to be used everywhere. I think they are marvelous!" and "I wanted to share my belief that self-assessment is not beyond beginning ESL students; that it reduces me and elevates the student to co-creators of the learning environments. I wanted to support the cause of alternative assessment and remind people that there are other options to the TABE."

> *All of these comments reinforce that writing for the journal has been an effective means for doing inquiry-based staff development as well as developing the knowledge base of what participatory assessment looks like in practice.*

All these comments reinforce that writing for the journal has been an effective means for doing inquiry-based staff development as well as developing the knowledge base of what participatory assessment looks like in practice.

So now that you have listened to my own reflections and critical commentary, I would like to invite you to read with pleasure what some of your colleagues across this country who have attended the dream conference have said about the journal.

We begin with "One Step of Inquiry: Documenting the Voices" by Lindy Whiton. Whiton conducted a research project last year to find out if the process of writing for the journal and the product itself was useful staff development and whether it increased the field's knowledge base. Her documentation on how she conducted her inquiry and what she learned from both the reader and writer surveys confirmed many of her hypotheses.

The voices of teachers in Massachusetts have been heard in Maine. In "Hello, Massachusetts", Brawders outlines what the vision and goals are for the new nationally-funded Horizon Project. According to Brawders, Maine has chosen portfolio assessment to replace standardized tests. Maine is doing what they call "contextualized portfolio assessment". By contextual they mean "each adult learner, each teacher, each administrator of an adult education program will develop a progress portfolio of their work for the year." The programs will then measure their qualitative and quantitative progress in relation to this baseline over a three-year period. What's important and exciting here is that programs are not measuring against some specified norm or against another but against themselves. As Brawders says, "What counts is the articulation of action steps that can be taken at the end of each year for the purpose of program improvement."

What's important and exciting here is that programs are not measuring against some specified norm or against another but against themselves.

Program improvement is not the only goal for portfolio assessment as Richard Goldberg tells us in "Portfolios as Alternative Assessments in a Community-based ESL to College Transition Program." Influenced by David Rosen's article "The Progress Portfolio" in AiA, Volume 2, and by his own experience in broadcast journalism with students assembling portfolios of their work, Goldberg decided to implement them in the U.S. Department of Education's Massachusetts English Literacy Demonstration project (MELD). The MELD program in Chinatown consists of three steps: an ESL class, an Adult Basic education class, and then enrollment at Bunker Hill Community College. Goldberg teaches the ABE class and began using portfolios to document writing progress. The turning point in the MELD program's use of portfolio assessments came when Bunker Hill Community College agreed to use student portfolios as an alternative to its standardized Comprehensive English Language Test (CELT).

Like Goldberg, Byron Barahona also got ideas from the journal on how to adapt and create tools for his volunteer program in northern California. He adds that all the different ideas shown in the journals have influenced his vision of assessment — from diagnosing problems and needs, to measuring the process of learning itself. For Barahona both the articles and the tools pose important questions: " First and foremost, they make us think and rethink the need and the process involved in evaluating progress. Second, they make us look back to analyze more critically what has been done. Third, they help us reflect upon what can be changed, adapted or implemented." His article, "Implementing Alternative Assessment Tools" is a wonderful tribute to the authors he has read as well as to the thoughtful process for real adaptation

In "Images of Participatory Assessment in Adult Education: An Analysis of Adventures in Assessment", Cathy Luna echoes Barahona when she says that the reports of "experiments" with participatory assessment practices may help practitioners, learners and researchers better understand the nature of critical reflection in adult education. Luna's careful and thoughtful analysis of the journal focuses attention on the way the authors write about how they involve adult learners in the development, use, and revision of the tools and processes used to assess learner progress and program evaluation. She asks "In what ways can practitioners and learners talk and work together to build frameworks for critical reflection and assessment?" Her research and analysis of the authors' writings about learner involvement reveal that there is less involvement of learners in the design and revision of assessment practices than in their implementation. This critical feedback is helpful because it points out where our strengths are and gives us direction for where we need to spend more energy.

In addition to these critical reflections are writings that fall under our established departments: What Counts? (math assessment), From the Field, Book Review, and Letters. The reader will note that there are a few other writings as well. Beginning in this issue and hopefully to continue is the start of a new column called "Learning From Experience," designed to encourage practitioners and learners to write about their own personal experiences being assessed or evaluated. Two other writings that complete this *Responding to the Dream Conference* journal are a survey completed by a practitioner from West Virginia and the mission statement from the "Transformers", the Massachusetts Participatory Assessment Team.

In "Out of A Pickle: Setting the Stage For Math", Martha Merson draws upon her experience with the ABE Math Team teachers, and writes about how to create a "class evaluation that doesn't hurt self-esteem, where learners' knowledge about the world gets counted and woven into the learning at hand, where work that is done in the class has a purpose." She reminds us that we need to educate our students to the alternatives and that we can do this by laying out a strategy for "familiarizing students with a broad view of mathematics, for opening the dialogue about what topics should get covered during math class, for using assessment as an opportunity to build expectations for a new or continuing class."

In what ways can practitioners and learners talk and work together to build frameworks for critical reflection and assessment?

Marilyn Gillespie in *From the Field* reminds us to keep the dialogue going and to try to find better ways to include learners in our conversations. She also challenges us, those who write for the AiA, to reflect upon the conditions that affect our work at large and how they could be changed.

Anne Marie De Martino's letter to Don Robishaw discusses the impact his article had on her thinking about goal setting. She thanks him for calling attention to the need to place goal setting strategies within a context of the greater philosophy of self-directed learning but disagrees with his statement that "It is very important that the facilitator has had similar life and schooling experiences as the learners to develop solidarity with them."

In "From Minnow to Overachiever" in *Learning From Experience,* I write about the lasting effects of being evaluated at different points in my youth and adult life.

Don Robishaw reviews a new book on portfolio assessment called *Portfolios in the Writing Classroom*. Though all the articles are written by and for teachers working in K-12, he recommends the book to us in Adult Education who are interested in portfolio as both a tool and a pedagogical stance.

And finally, *Responding to The Dream Conference* ends with the Transformers mission statement and strategies for achieving their goals. The Transformers are a group of ABE and ESL practitioners who are "dedicated to concentrating and coordinating efforts towards broadening the understanding of adult educators, learners, administrators, and funders about participatory principles which are the basis for meaningful assessment and social change."

We need to figure out a way to bring the learners into our conversation. We need to hear their voices. We need to know if our new conceptual frameworks have merit, if our new approaches to assessing skills are useful and if our attempts to capture their gains meaningful.

Recommendations for the Future

As part of my final reflection, I would like to conclude with some recommendations for the future of the journal. My first recommendation is that we need to figure out a way to bring the learners into our conversation. We need to hear their voices. We need to know if our new conceptual frameworks have merit, if our new approaches to assessing skills are useful and if our attempts to capture their gains meaningful. "We need to risk finding out not just how our learners experience learning but how we help or fail them in that process." Second, I would also like to figure out a way to document what people do as a group or community. I think we need tools and procedures that not only measure individuals but communities of individuals working towards social change. Third, I would like to see the journal take a political stand and support native language and biliteracy. I would like to see articles in the journal on how to assess native language literacy, not just for diagnostic purposes or as way to establish a baseline for comparing English language acquisition, but as a way to affirm and validate the belief that our learners have a right to be bilingual and bi-literate and that we believe English is a plus, not a substitution. Lastly, I would like us all to practice a little self-reflection on our own past experiences at being assessed or evaluated. Were these positive or negative experiences? Do we now as teachers impose what was done to us on others, and if not, what informs our choice?

In general, we need more critical reflection. As Stephen Brookfield says, we need to take a reflective stance on our practice (both past and present) to be clear about what we stand for or are trying to achieve. We need to pose questions not just seek solutions or create tools. We need to become skillful teachers in our reflective stance on practice and our dance of experimentation and risk-taking.

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One Step of Inquiry

Documenting the Voices

by
Lindy Whiton

Western Mass. SABES

The objective of this paper is to describe the effect documenting inquiry has on practitioners who write for *Adventures in Assessment*. This is a journal dedicated to writings on alternative, learner-centered assessment and published by Massachusetts' System for Adult Basic Education Support (SABES).

The purpose of this research came from wanting to know if the process of writing for the journal was useful staff development. It has developed since then to also ask if the product itself provides opportunities for staff development, and whether it increases the field's knowledge base.

Many questions come into play when people talk about documentation. It is my belief that a place that allows practitioners to document their work also encourages them to continue to do research. It is also my belief that the act of doing so is part of the process of inquiry and not just the product of the research, that the act of documenting encourages teachers to look more closely at what they have done and to reflect on their process.

HOW THIS INQUIRY WAS CONDUCTED: METHODOLOGY

As originally published in the Introduction to Adventures in Assessment, Volume I, the journal's creators hoped it would become a "resource by and for practitioners from which to select and adapt tools for their own contexts." (McGrail 1991). The development of this resource depends upon programs-based practitioners' research, the results of which will help develop the field of adult education (Lytle & Wolfe 1989). It was felt that giving practitioners a place to publish would not only encourage teacher-research, but be a place where their work could be validated and shared with their colleagues. According to Lytle & Wolfe (1989) and Auerbach (1992), many researchers believe it is imperative that practitioners begin to document their inquiry, to record their objections and to engage in dialogues with one another informing their colleagues and adding to the body of qualitative research in education.

First, it was assumed that **writing for this journal would be good staff development**. Good staff development is defined as the process of building, reinforcing, and maintaining effective teaching practices. Ultimately, staff development acts as an antidote to burnout. Second, the **actual process of writing would be important to development of the field** (Gillespie 1991). I felt that the actual steps in revision that authors would take were important to their personal development and that the act of publishing would be validating. Third, the journal would **increase the knowledge and understanding of alternative assessment**; and fourth, **this is important to practitioners**. The journal offers a stage for the voices of teachers to be heard. It is a place where other teachers can listen not only to the "tale of the tools," but to the narrative, the story of "Who," "What," "Why," and "How come?"

In the past several months, an attempt has been made to collect data on the effect of the journal, to discover what both authors and readers thought about *Adventures in Assessment* and was it doing what we assumed it would do? When an article was published, did it validate a practitioner's work? Did it actually help to spark inquiry in other programs? It is this data that I would like to share with others.

All 21 people who contributed articles to the journal were sent letters and surveys. Only eleven people returned the surveys. The other ten authors were contacted, but their input never was completed *(see appendix)*.

Five hundred copies of the Readers' Survey were sent out. The actual survey form was developed by McGrail, two staff members of SABES' Central Resource Center, and myself *(see Appendix 2)*. There was no attempt to concentrate on specific groups (e.g. the SABES' coordinators mailing list versus regular journal readers). The objective of the Readers' Survey was to discover whether practitioners were using their colleagues' writings to further their staff development or as encouragement or inspiration to do their own plunge into alternative assessment. Only twenty-three of the five hundred questionnaires mailed were returned, less than 5%.

ANALYSIS

Readers' Surveys

It should be noted that not only was the mailing list inappropriate for this survey, but the turn-around-time on the survey was much too short. In approximately a one-week period, twenty-three responded. Out of that group, sixteen stated they had never heard of the journal. Several conclusions can be drawn from this data. First, respondents find it easier to simply check the box and mail the forms rather than spend time reflecting and answering questions. Therefore, those who could just check "No" on the "Have you ever read this journal?" question had the easiest task and were most apt to send it back. Second, unfortunately, practitioners were inundated by surveys last fall and this was just one of many. It should be noted that while attending the annual state conference, practitioners did approach me and apologize for their absent-mindedness in not responding to the survey. Third, the mailing lists were deemed inappropriate. The decision was made to ask each SABES coordinator for the names of ten practitioners to whom they had personally handed the journal. Surveys will ultimately be sent to those people, supported by telephone interviews. In the interim, copies of the journal were sent to those individuals who had responded they were unfamiliar with the *Adventures in Assessment.*

The seven responses that were most informative for this research emphasized using the tools and peoples' reflections as models to adapt in their own classrooms, which is a major objective of the journal.

The objective of the Readers' Survey was to discover whether practitioners were using their colleagues' writings to further their staff development or as encouragement or inspiration to do their own plunge into alternative assessment.

The majority used the journal regularly. Thus, we believe the journal fits the definition of "good staff development.

Authors' Surveys

The author's answers were considered in reference to the assumptions listed above. I examined whether our assumptions were repeated in their answers. I also wanted to know if the journal was useful in ways other than initially predicted. What was most interesting in this process was that, while we attempted to show that the journal was a product of teacher-research, which served a very important role, it was actually just a snapshot which helped us to look at the process of inquiry at a specific moment. Authors referred to the journal as "a useful tool."

Many of the authors did speak of their process with Loren McGrail, editor of *Adventures in Assessment*, as important elements in the writing of the article. Loren's behavior was reflective of her theoretical beliefs of writing instruction for all. She treats teachers and learners the same. These comments made it quite apparent to me that Loren's input and her inclusion as co-researcher was necessary to the project. She brought to the paper an entire body of data she has compiled from her perspective as the editor and from her close association with the authors (*see Introduction*).

CONCLUSION

***Adventures in Assessment* is perceived by contributors and readers alike as good staff development.** It provides practitioners with a process that builds, reinforces and maintains effective teaching practices. It is also a successful vehicle for helping teachers to write and declare their voice. "The journal helped me to believe in me." "I have a voice and it, too, is worth listening to." "It reinforced my beliefs." These comments are representative of the types of responses I received. For ten of the eleven respondents, the act of writing for the journal was a successful staff development activity. It should also be noted that, of the respondents familiar with *Adventures in Assessment*, the majority used the journal regularly. Thus, we believe the journal fits the definition of "good staff development."

The actual process of writing is an important one. Publishing is valuable in validating educators' voices.Most of the respondents in both categories talked about sharing. They spoke about the importance of sharing in the field and the place the journal played in that. They spoke about it being a place in the process, not the product at the end of the process. In his responses, Paul Trunnell suggested we allow more dialogue to happen in the journal itself. "I would like to encourage the journal and the field towards dialogue-based on dialogue-intended work. Particularly now that such a range of tools and procedures has been discussed."

According to Janet Isserlis, the journal is not necessarily a vehicle for closure; it is a way to lead to more questions.

The journal does create a public space for teacher writings. This public space is an important step for teachers to now take *(Cochran and Lytle '93, Gillespie '90)*. These authors never spoke directly about the publishing as being validating, however. They were much more aware of the sharing with others as being validating in and of itself and spoke of the act of writing as helping to "clarify", "review", or be more "succinct." "I was inspired by the work done by Janet Kelley. I was reminded of the value of sharing tools, frustrations, and solutions and thought that writing an article was the easiest way to share with a larger group." "I also thought that other practitioners might think of improvements, and I would learn from them." The effect would "be that they might get some ideas about reflecting on their own work in ways that would ultimately be helpful to them and to their learners." They spoke of the journal as a useful tool.

The journal increases ones knowledge base. This is evident in how many adult education classes are now using *Adventures in Assessment* as a classroom reading. Continued compilation of data from readers will clarify just how their knowledge base is being increased.

In regards to the authors' voices, some saw their article as an addition to the field; others did not.

There is a genuine interest in the journal. "Thanks for the encouragement. . ." was a comment frequently noted. Other comments indicated bona fide enthusiasm and support for the journal. The following comments repeatedly surfaced during our research: "Let's get more people involved." "dialogue" "people should try. . ." "I appreciate its presence."

This research did not reveal anything startling. It basically confirmed by hypothesis about the process. The only surprise for me was that practitioners did not feel that the actual article was an ending point, nor a concrete validation of their work. Instead, they focused on what part the articles played in the process of inquiry; they were a part of the process, one point along the trail. Although that finding was surprising to me, it was also exciting and reaffirming. It was a stronger indication that the journal was a stimulus for further thought and conversation.

This research has not come to an end; it is not complete. The readers' surveys are a very important piece of the work, and I am planning to continue this research. I believe that this information will not only support the publishing of the journal, but will also support inquiry-based staff development. Not all the authors who responded to my questionnaire were involved in actual inquiry projects, however, most were involved in their own questioning process. I hope that further research will not only support the claims that inquiry-based staff development is successful, but it will also indicate more clearly why. Listening to the readers' responses should shed light on some of the answers, or at least help us to form new questions. The authors of "The Tale of the Tools," Volume 5, were not interviewed. Their responses will be enlightening because many of those articles came straight from either the assessment or math inquiry projects. Their perspectives may be slightly different. I hope to keep the research on-going and to provide an update later on.

This research has not come to an end; it is not complete. The readers' surveys are a very important piece of the work, and I am planning to continue this research. I believe that this information will not only support the publishing of the journal, but will also support inquiry-based staff development.

It is still important to look at the changes in classroom practices, changes in methodology, and learners' success in which the journal may be inspirational. Possibly more important, however, is that it continues to provide a place where linkages can be made, where teachers and eventually learners can write about practices in assessment and curricula that model the most effective programs. *Adventures in Assessment* models writing those practices in its various steps towards publication. The collaborative efforts of the editor, assistant editor, and author need to continue to model the type of writing process work that we subscribe to. This, in turn, models our understanding of good assessment practices as well. Thus, for me, the data echoes what "these voices" have said, that Adventures in Assessment is good staff development.

The journal will always play different roles at different times for different teachers. But most importantly, it provides great linkages and begins to end the massive problem of isolation across all members of the adult education community.

POSTSCRIPT

Now that I have completed this part of the research, taught a mini-course on alternative assessment, and used the journal as text, I would like to state that staff development is just that — Development. People are at different places with different needs. There were nine regular participants in my class. At the end, only three were comfortable enough to take a stab at writing for the sixth edition. I thought in the beginning there would be more. However, all group members had read all five issues and found pieces to respond to, whether verbally or in their process of developing assessment for their classrooms.

Another example of the outcome of inquiry-based staff development is the "Mentor Project" that the Component #3 practitioners have now developed and begun. They are finding different programs are at different points of the process. They need to fit what they are doing to the individual program needs. *Adventures in Assessment* will be appropriate to use for many points of this process. The journal will always play different roles at different times for different teachers. But most importantly, it provides great linkages and begins to end the massive problem of isolation across all members of the adult education community.

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Responses to the Journal

This survey is to determine the ~~a~~effect that *Adventures in Assessment: Learner Centered Approaches to Assessment and Evaluation* has had on the field. Does the journal either change or validate people's practices and is it a good staff development tool? We define staff development as the process of reinforcing, maintaining and building effective teaching practices. Ultimately, staff development acts as an antidote to burnout.

1. Have you read *Adventures in Assessment?* Yes ✓ No ___

If you have, which volume(s)?
✓a. Volume 1 (Yellow)
✓b. Volume 2 (Light Green)
✓c. Volume 3 (Purple)
✓d. Volume 4 (Dark Green)
✓e. Volume 5 (gold)

2. Do you find the layout/design of *Adventures in Assessment* accessible or easy to understand? Yes ✓ No ___

Comments:

It's become more professional and easier to read as we've gone from Vol I to Vol V. I would, however, like to see the return of full-sized tools and samples rather than reduced versions, so that they can be copied directly from the page and used. That was very helpful in earlier editions.

3. What criteria do you use when deciding which articles to read?

Titles or articles ✓
Author ___
Interests ✓
Other (Specify) ___

Do you read the introductions? ✓
Do you read Voices from the Field? ✓
Do you read Getting Started? ✓
Do you read Ongoing? ✓
Do you read What Counts? ✓

Comments:

I read whatever applies to my field of interest, and there is ample material for me!

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

4. Has *Adventures in Assessment* affected your thinking or beliefs? Yes ✓ No ___

Comments:

Yes. It's helped validate the use of alternative assessment tools and helped me see it is logistically feasible and does work. Adventures in Assessment also impressed upon me how flexible and adaptable alternative assessment is.

5. Has *Adventures in Assessment* affected your practices (such as sparked a new tool or thrown out all of them)? Yes ✓ No ___

Comments:

I particularly liked your checklists for skills attained. My students get a real boost when they can rate themselves higher in a skill than when they began. It's the small, incremental steps that are so important to be able to document.

6. Have you changed the your assessment practices in your classroom and/or program?

Yes. Based on research and some of your "tools," I have developed "phase I" of a portfolio effort for a group of teachers at the Adult Career Development Center in Richmond. Hopefully, this will be the beginning of some good *

7. Do you have ways in which you include learners in your assessment practices? ✓

What are they?

I "interview" and do progress checklists initially. I then continue to refer to "their portfolio" as classes proceed. I collect several samples of their work and, at a midway-point as well as at the end of the session, we review the pieces, do another progress checklist, revise goals and discuss how far they've come.

---

* alternative assessment practices in their programs.

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8a. Have you ever used any ideas or tools from an article? ✓ Which one?

- Burke Modified Interview
- Writing Process
- Checklist
- Goals list
- Writing Sample

8b. Please comment on how you used it. Did you change it? Did you adapt it?

I will send you a package of how we at the Center have adapted your tools, once we have finalized it (in May or June 1994).

8c. May we publish these comments in the "Letter to the Editor" section of the journal?

Yes ✓ No ___

9. Would you be interested in writing for the journal? Yes ✓ No ___
If yes, please fill in the information below or call Loren McGrail at World Education (617) 482-9485.

Name: Susan Holt

Address: 9504 Steamboat Dr
Glen Allen, VA 23060

Phone: (804) 747-8306

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

SAMPLE SURVEY. IF YOU WISH TO FILL ONE OUT, SEE PAGES 75 AND 76

This survey is to determine the effect that *Adventures in Assessment: Learner Centered Approaches to Assessment and Evaluation* has had on the field. Does the journal either change or validate people's practices and is it a good staff development tool? We define staff development as the process of reinforcing, maintaining and building effective teaching practices. Ultimately, staff development acts as an antidote to burnout.

1. Have you read *Adventures in Assessment*? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If you have, which volume(s)? ☐ Volume 1 (Yellow) ☐ Volume 2 (Light Green)
☐ Volume 3 (Purple) ☐ Volume 4 (Dark Green)

2. Do you find the layout/design of *Adventures in Assessment* accessible or easy to understand?Yes No

Comments:

3. What criteria do you use when deciding which articles to read?

☐ Titles or articles
☐ Author
☐ Interests
☐ Other (Specify)

Do you read the introductions? ☐ Yes ☐ No
Do you read Voices from the Field? ☐ Yes ☐ No
Do you read Getting Started? ☐ Yes ☐ No
Do you read Ongoing? ☐ Yes ☐ No
Do you read What Counts? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Comments:

4. Has *Adventures in Assessment* affected your thinking or beliefs? ☐ Yes ☐ No
Comments:

5. Has *Adventures in Assessment* affected your practices (such as sparked a new tool orthrown out all of them)? ☐ Yes ☐ No
Comments:

6. Have you changed the your assessment practices in your classroom and/or program? ☐ Yes ☐ No

7. Do you have ways in which you include learners in your assessment practices? What are they?

8a. Have you ever used any ideas or tools from an article? ☐ Yes ☐ No Which one?

8b. Please comment on how you used it. Did you change it? Did you adapt it?

8c. May we publish these comments in the "Letter to the Editor" section of the journal?
☐ Yes ☐ No

9. Would you be interested in writing for the journal? Yes No
If yes, please fill in the information below or call Loren McGrail at World Education, (617) 482-9485.

Name:

Address:

Phone:

Portfolio in Maine

Hello, Massachusetts

The New England Literacy Resource Center was established to strengthen adult literacy services in New England by promoting and facilitating collaborations and sharing among adult literacy practitioners, resource centers and policymakers in our region. NELRC will be doing its job if we can turn the information flowing across our borders form a trickle to a stream with many tributaries. Alternative assessment is one area of great interest across New England. Clearly, we have a lot to learn from each other.

I had the privilege to participate in the kick-off training for Maine's Horizon Project in which portfolio assessment is central. The level of energy and enthusiasm I witnessed is a good match to the ambitious scope of the project. Its reporting and evaluation dimensions, in particular, tackle some of the greatest unanswered questions about alternative assessment. I am eager to learn from Maine's experience, and I hope that we will all hear updates on this project.

I hope this article serves as inspiration for practitioners across New England to explore alternative assessment and to contribute to the growing body of information and experience on the subject. May this article mark the beginning of sustained collaboration on alternative assessment among all New England states.

— Silja Kallenbach, NELRC Coordinator

by
Sandy Brawders

Director, CALL
Center for Adult
Learning and Literacy
in Maine

The adult education network in the state of Maine wants to thank all the teachers for the excellent work that you produced in the five volumes of *Adventures in Assessment* that we have received. Thank you for being honest, persistent, committed, creative, flamboyant, grounded and, above all, diverse.

All of us in Maine are hoping for a summit of assessment in the next 12 months and all journal contributors will be sent an invitation. I would like to thank Loren McGrail for her ability to encourage busy practitioners to share their work for the greater good of all adult learners. The five volumes may become a bestseller in Maine. I am using them as the only text in an evaluation course I am teaching through the University of Maine.

> "Escaping flatland is an essential task of envisioning information — for all the interesting worlds (physical, biological, imaginary, human) that we seek to understand ar inevitably and happily multivariate in nature. Not flatlands."
>
> — from *Envisioning Information* by Edward Tufte

The excitement that we want to share with you is that Maine through its Quality Indicators has chosen *portfolio assessment* to replace our standardized tests, *peer evaluation* as our program review, *teacher-based research* to affect public policy, and a *new reporting mechanism* that blends qualitative and quantitative data into a usable commodity for program improvement.

Maine is doing what we call contextualized portfolio assessment. Each adult learner, each teacher, each administrator

What counts is the articulation of action steps that can be taken at the end of each year for the purpose of program improvement.

of an adult education program will develop a progress portfolio of their work for the year. This portfolio will not be scored, graded, ranked, or put in competition to beat out some other program for funding. The purpose of the tiered portfolios that build on each other is program improvement.

Each program in Maine is developing a baseline of who they are, what they offer, what they have for funding, how many hours teachers work, what services are/are not in the community to support next steps, what barriers might be insurmountable for the adult learners given rural issues of transportation, etc.

The baseline is the first item in everyone's portfolio; the programs will measure qualitative and quantitative progress in relation to this baseline over a three-year period. The program measures against itself, not in relation to a program three hours away with four times the funding and a different population!

What counts is the articulation of action steps that can be taken at the end of each year for the purpose of program improvement. The steps and follow through become the basis of the self-evaluation of a peer evaluation process that may occur every three or four years.

In their roles, teachers see themselves change through their portfolio depending on the people with whom they are working. Adult learners understand their importance to improving the program for the next year.

Adult learner portfolios are only one measure of a programs goals being reached. The yearly action plans of each program double as their end of year report, and gives the Staff Development Team specific instructions for prioritizing program needs.

Through our Horizon Grant with the National Institute for Literacy, Maine has seven regional trainers working on site with teachers, adult learners, and administrators to create this integrated system of assessment, evaluation, research, and reporting. Reporting will no longer be a mystery that only administrators understand. Adult learners and teachers will know why we need certain things and will have the language to question whether we do need certain things!

This contextualized portfolio process gets rid of the secret language of standardized testing results, the secret language of funding, and the secret language of day school. This is education among peers! Portfolio allows respect and dignity to prevail!

We are using the portfolio process as a real curriculum for developing critical thinking skills and also as a vehicle to demonstrate transferable skills.

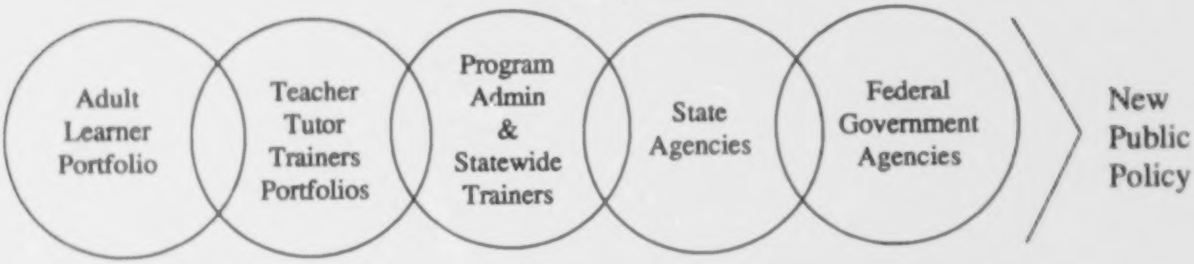
Some programs in Maine are using video portfolio, portfolio on disc, audio portions, or a combination of various media. Jokes are circulating that we want to eventually send our state report to the federal government as a hologram showing the quantitative and then the qualitative. I think pop-ups would also get some attention.

The real point of the humor is that technology is giving us permission to think and display what we think differently. Yes, there are CD-ROM life-long learning portfolios that are not just text! Technology will change the way we perceive information. To believe that we will not find a way to report large amounts of qualitative data from portfolios when we have a computer with 500 megabytes of memory is absurd. We cannot allow a lack of imagination to stop us, especially if it means a more truthful document upon which to base the development of public policy and funding for adult learners.

Join us in this great adventure and leave flatland behind. Reports are meant to be read and anticipated, evaluation is meant to lead towards exciting change, assessment is a vehicle of building self-esteem and documenting progress, and research is a way to check standardization and assumptions.

If only I could put a pop-up here, just a small, discreet pop-up, not too flashy…

EDUCATIONAL AUTOBIOGRAPHIES
for Every Level


Adult Learner Portfolio
Teacher Tutor Trainers Portfolios
Program Admin & Statewide Trainers
State Agencies
Federal Government Agencies
New Public Policy

- *individualized
- *measure progress and outcomes
- *determine goals and ongoing assessment
- *no secrets cc: learner knows everything/has everything
- *process taught
- *accomplishments demonstrated
- *ownership by learner

- *changing roles captured
- *determine next step for next year
- *evaluates materials content priorities
- *new teacher training mechanism
- *this is about a teacher's role with the student

- *program goals met
- *change determined
- *facilitate reporting
- *research questions
- *process set up for input to state plan

- *quantitative
- *qualitative analysis
- *interagency reporting
- *policy development
- *cross fertilization

- *determine need for new inititatives
- *new funding levels supported
- *innovation and research field based

Contextualized Evaluation

PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT *FOREVER* CHANGES:

Content

Methodology

Evaluation

The Golden Rules

The Agreed Upon Ethical Framework for Maine Adult Educators

1. **The adult learner controls, owns, and designs their own portfolio with the practitioner. It is to be portable and transferable.**
2. **The learner will self-evaluate their own portfolio (progress portfolio) and learn to seek peer evaluation of their outcome portfolio.**
3. Demonstration of progress toward the learner's long and short term goals will take place within the portfolio.
4. Portfolio assessment **models** the concept of process thinking, evaluation, sequential thinking, problem solving, data gathering, theorizing, critiquing and contrasting ideas.
5. The completion of the outcome portfolio is a **marker** in the adult learner's process of life long learning.
6. Portfolio assessment changes the role of the teacher to that of a facilitator, researcher, consultant, peer learner, active listener . . . .
7. Teacher enthusiasm must be paramount and the use of the portfolio should develop as a daily educational ritual with the adult learner.
8. The reporting goal of the portfolio is to thread both quanitative and qualitative data into a more realistic picture of adult learning through each learner, each teacher, each program, each state.

Portfolio assessment is a vehicle for capturing the developing educational autobiography of each adult learner.

Portfolios as Alternative Assessment in a Community-Based ESL Transition Program

by
Richard
Goldberg

Asian American Civic Association

This article concerns an idea that is still evolving. It's an idea that was implemented in January, 1993, but was hatched several years earlier through my experiences at other workplaces. It's an idea that exemplifies the spirit of cooperation between two community-based organizations and a community college. And it's an idea, similar to one tried in other places, which shows students a lot about how they can see their progress beyond traditional standardized tests.

Background

The Massachusetts English Literacy Demonstration (MELD) was established in late 1992 through a U.S. Department of Education grant. The Massachusetts Department of Education wrote the proposal for three partnerships between community-based organizations and community colleges.

The focus here is on one of those partnerships, involving the Asian American Civic Association and Quincy School Community Council, both located in Boston's Chinatown community, and Bunker Hill Community College. The partnership adopted the acronym ETP (English Transitional Program).

The MELD program in Chinatown consists of three steps: an ESL class, Adult Basic Education (my class) and then enrollment at Bunker Hill in programs leading to either a one-year certificate or a two-year associate's degree. Depending on their English proficiency, students can enter the program at any of the three steps.

At all levels students receive counseling throughout the transition from Chinatown to Bunker Hill, which lasts between 20 weeks and almost one year. Before the first classes began, teachers and program administrators agreed that helping students build an on-going collection of their work was worth a try. Since MELD was part of a national demonstration project, we had the freedom to experiment.

Previous Experience

My feelings about portfolio assessments go back to an experience in my previous career as a television news producer and writer in Boston. While teaching broadcast journalism courses at two local colleges, it was easy for me to have students assemble portfolios. Among other things, the curriculum called for students to write between 15 and 25 news stories ranging from politics to economics to items off the police blotter. They also had to put together a five-minute news program on an audio tape cassette. I instructed students to use this collection of their work as a presentation portfolio similar to the one described below. When students returned from their internships at radio and TV stations, they told me about excellent feedback from their employers. Many students heard similar things from their bosses such as, "These examples show me you know enough to get right to work. I don't have to take time to teach you."

The turning point in the MELD program's use of portfolio assessments came when Bunker Hill Community College agreed to use student portfolios as an alternative to its standardized Comprehensive English Language Test (CELT)

In the past two years, I have read some of the recent literature about alternative assessments, beginning with David Rosen's article, *The Progress Portfolio* (see *Adventures in Assessment*, Vol. 2: Ongoing, May, 1992). Especially helpful were the resources quoted at the end of David's article. At that time the presentation portfolio model and its step-by-step process seemed like a natural for many of the students in my class at a displaced workers transition center. Unfortunately, since it was late in the cycle, I didn't do anything with this idea.

A publication which had an even greater effect was *It Belongs to me a Guide to Portfolio Assessment in Adult Education Programs* (Fingeret, 1993) (reviewed by Steve Reuys in *Adventures in Assessment*, Vol. 5: The Tale of the Tools, October, 1993). Fingeret's work, which crystallized many of my beliefs about alternative assessment, is a great "how-to-do-it" from people who have done it. Of greatest value for me was the section on moving materials from writing folders to portfolios and how students assess their collections on a regular basis and make the choices as to what constitutes "progress."

Beginnings

During the first cycle of the MELD class, I was fortunate to have a group of students who liked to write, so writing became the focus of their portfolios. The ABE course content is theme-based and students generate most of the themes, such as the American college system, health care, workers' rights, the legal system, and American government, economics, and culture.

Throughout much of the cycle, students were writing a composition a week, which gave us plenty to look at once we began the process of moving material from writing folders to their portfolios. Toward the end of the cycle, one of the issues that surfaced was fear of failure, especially in a college classroom the students next step.

"Certainly, I worry about the college class. I ask myself: If I go to Bunker Hill, can I understand the teacher's lecture? Can I finish the homework? Can I qualify for the test? Can I———Oh, I don't know."

One of the ways we dealt with these fears was to have students conduct a self-assessment to show them how they improved in almost 23 weeks. (*See Fig.1, Progress Checklist*). In subsequent cycles, the self-assessment was done at the midpoint and again at the end of the course.

There were other things in students' folders. (*See Fig. 1-A, From Folders to Portfolios*). One woman kept a running list of activities by skill area: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. We also had a math test with no computation, only brief descriptions in English of math terminology (the students' often-articulated math weakness), such as perimeter, area, volume, radius, diameter, and circumference. Folders also included copies of Individual Education Plans (IEPs), which were updated with the program counselor about every six weeks. In many cases, students' educational goals became more sharply focused through these documents (*see Fig.*

2, *Individual Educational Plans*).

All of this presented a big problem as we tried to wrap things up in the last two weeks of the cycle. There was simply too much material in the folders and too little time for students to reflect on what was meaningful as an indicator of improved English skills. In the end, each student decided what he or she would put into the portfolios. Since this was the first time we were using portfolios, the criteria we used included questions such as, "What kinds of things in your folder would give a teacher at Bunker Hill a good picture of your ability to use English?" "What things in your folder show that you used English well?" Among their entries were the kinds of compositions which they might be asked to do in college, such as compare and contrast or taking a point of view and defending it (one example, "would you disobey a law which you believed was unfair?"). Then copies were made. Original documents were returned to each student. A completed application form for admission to Bunker Hill was included and the portfolios were turned over to the college.

Portfolios at Bunker Hill

The turning point in the MELD program's use of portfolio assessments came when Bunker Hill Community College agreed to use student portfolios as an alternative to its standardized Comprehensive English Language Test (CELT), which is given to non-native English speakers who apply for admission. The entire process of convincing college officials involved a discussion between Alan Shute, MELD's program liaison at Bunker Hill, and Ralph Radell, chairman of the school's ESL Department. Alan is a full-time employee who works out of Bunker Hill's Center for Self-Directed Learning. He also teaches an ESL course at the college and becomes the advisor to all MELD students once they register for courses. Long before they get there, he introduces students to the resources available at the Learning Center, usually in the second week of each cycle. His presence is a key element of our program and makes the Chinatown connection to the school much more visible and credible. Once students enroll at the college, they can take many courses in the Learning Center as well as in a traditional classroom.

The first time Radell looked at students' portfolios, he was not given their CELT scores. He was concerned about portfolio entries, for example, not knowing how many times their essays had been revised.

The first time Radell looked at students' portfolios, he was not given their CELT scores. He was concerned about portfolio entries, for example, not knowing how many times their essays had been revised. A writing sample done under a 30-minute deadline on the same day as the CELT is given high priority in the evaluation of borderline test scores. After the next cycle, more and systematized information was provided. This time, CELT scores were included, along with results of each student's work in the Learning Center over the past six months, attendance, and a student profile giving some of Alan's personal observations for a more complete picture of the student's abilities and motivation. Students are actively involved in the decision on where they will be placed. Before they register for courses, they talk with Alan about the challenge and pace of the courses in which their portfolios placed them. For the most part, students are happy with their placement by portfolio, although in a few cases, students have felt more comfortable starting in the lower level courses where their standardized test scores placed them (*see Fig. 3, BHCC Results*).

Lessons of the First Year

With each cycle, the process of introducing, implementing, and managing portfolios as alternative assessments gets easier, since all of us are sold on the idea that portfolios offer a more complete, in-depth picture of students than their test scores. The concept is still introduced during the first week of classes in Chinatown. Before students in the ESL class move up to the ABE class, they present a portfolio of their work to me. Now we try to show students that a portfolio is a way for them to measure their progress over a period of time. There is also an incentive for students, since we remind them Bunker Hill gives their portfolios equal weight to the standardized college placement test. MELD program graduates who are now students at the college come back to talk with current students and often mention how they felt comfortable with the academic ESL level placement made by their portfolio.

There is also an incentive for students, since we remind them Bunker Hill gives their portfolios equal weight to the standardized college placement test.

Subsequent classes do essays during the first week of the cycle on defining goals, which become the first entries in their portfolios (*see Fig.4, Defining Goals*). We give students more time to reflect on what's in their folders. One ABE class took almost one hour to answer these questions 12 weeks into the cycle:

What in your folder tells you that you have made progress?

How do you know?

What other things that you have done (not in the folder) also tell you that your English has improved?

What else would you like to add to your folder? (See Fig. 5, Portfolio Evaluation).

This was a big change from the previous kinds of biweekly class evaluations I used, short answers (I liked ; I did not like) and checklists, which were often rushed at the end of Friday classes and rarely told me more than I already knew.

We also allow more time for reflection at the end of each cycle, when students notice some of the biggest changes and I see the biggest rewards of portfolio assessments (*see Fig. 5: How Did I Improve?*).

The Future

As we near the end of the second and final year of federal funding for the MELD program, we continue to refine the process of portfolio assessments. Now the portfolios are used not only as a presentation portfolio for enrolling at Bunker Hill, but also as an on-going document of students' work once they get there. As their advisor, Alan tracks their progress and adds to the portfolio teachers' mid-semester evaluations or recommendations for early intervention if a student is at risk. Also included are course schedules, transcripts and requirements for each student's chosen certificate or degree program. The portfolio is then used when Alan advises students during registration periods.

After just one semester the results are encouraging. Only one student said she struggled with her placement according to the portfolio, but she passed the course. Another student who placed into non-ESL academic courses gave birth to her first child just before final exams and will have to make up incomplete work. All the MELD students moved up the following semester, a tribute to their motivation and commitment. Nine more graduates of our classes in Chinatown joined them at the college in January, 1994. There's also evidence that portfolio assessments are taking hold in other parts of Bunker Hill. Some teachers in the college's non-credit ESL division have followed MELD's example and are encouraging their students to develop portfolios as an alternative placement to the CELT.

Figure 1

PROGRESS CHECKLIST

My reading comprehension of English has improved
- __ a great deal
- __ a fair amount
- __ not very much
- __ not at all

When I read something in English now, I can
(check all of the things you can do better than before)

- __ understand the main idea of what I read.
- __ give a short oral summary of what I read.
- __ give a short written summary of what I read.
- __ use my background knowledge of the subject to help me understand what I read.
- __ guess the meanings of some new words from how they are used in a sentence.

My writing skills have improved
- __ a great deal
- __ a fair amount
- __ not very much
- __ not at all

When I write an essay now, I can
(check all of those things you can do better than before)

- __ brainstorm several ideas about the subject.
- __ organize my ideas before writing.
- __ follow directions and write on a specific subject.
- __ write sentences that are clear and easy to understand.
- __ use correct punctuation and capitalization.
- __ find my grammar mistakes and correct them.
- __ write an essay under a time limit.

My speaking skills have improved
- __ a great deal
- __ a fair amount
- __ not very much
- __ not at all

When I speak English now, I can
(check all of the things you can do better than before)

- __ speak clearly so that an English speaker can understand me.
- __ ask an English speaker questions when I do not understand him or her.
- __ use English more in the classroom to speak with teachers and classmates.
- __ give the correct pronunciation of most English words I know.

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My listening and note-taking skills have improved
__ a great deal
__ a fair amount
__ not very much
__ not at all

When I listen to the teacher or to a tape now, I can
(check all of things you can do better than before)

__ understand the main idea of what the person is saying.
__ understand most of what the person said in the lecture or the tape.
__ take notes using my own abbreviations or "shorthand."
__ answer questions correctly about what the speaker said.

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Figure 1-A

From Folders to Portfolios in the First MELD Class

* Writings
* Self-assessment
* Activities by skill area
* Math test
* Individual Education Plan (IEP)
* Completed Bunker Hill admission application

Figure 2

INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLANS (IEP's)

NAME: S.X. DATE: Sept. 2, 1993

GOAL: Medical Secretary

WHEN: 1994

STEPS	ACHIEVED
1. Finished ESL class	4/93
2. Move up to ABE class	5/93
3. Will go to Bunker Hill Community College	9/93
4. Will register for BHCC	9/7/93

ACTIONS

1. Listen to the radio and watch the TV to improve my listening.
2. Read more book to know more words.
3. Talk more to improve my speaking.

BARRIERS

Listening and vocabulary are still my barriers.

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NAME: H.L.

GOAL: After I get a high school certificate, I will apply for college to study electronics.

WHEN: ?

STEPS	ACHIEVED
1. Enroll ABE class	7/93
2. Go to EDP (External Diploma Program) at AACA.	?/94
3. Apply for college to study electronics program.	?/95

ACTIONS

1. Working on grammar, writing, essays and discussion.
2. Watch TV and finish the homework.
3. Go to BHCC to use computer.

BARRIERS

Time problem (restaurant cook)

Figure 3

Most of the students making the transition to Bunker Hill Community College from Chinatown place in one of three levels of academic ESL courses, one being the lowest and three being the highest and last level of ESL before students can enroll in regular academic courses. In many cases, the alternative portfolio assessments placed students one level higher than they were placed by the CELT (Comprehensive English Language Test), which the college uses as its standardized placement test for non-native English speakers. These assessments were done in August, 1993 for students planning to enroll for the September, 1993 semester. Once they enrolled, all but three took courses at the level of their portfolio assessments.

Student	Placement According to College's Standardized Test	Placement According to Portfolio Assessment
T.L.	ESL Level 1	ESL Level 2
J.W.	ESL Level 2	ESL Level 3
H.W.	ESL Level 1	ESL Level 2
S.X.	ESL Level 3 (This student was right on the line between Levels 2 and 3. She asked to be placed in Level 2).	ESL Level 2
G.L.	ESL Level 3	ESL Level 3
Q.K.	ESL Level 3	ESL Level 3
M.C.	ESL Level 2	ESL Level 2
F.L.	ESL Level 1 (This student asked to be placed in Level 1).	ESL Level 2
C.F.	ESL Level 1	ESL Level 2
Y.T.	ESL Level 1	ESL Level 2
K.C.	ESL Level 2	ESL Level 3
P.C.	ESL Level 2	ESL Level 3
M.H.	ESL Level 1 (This student asked to be placed in Level 1).	ESL Level 2
B.H.	ESL Level 2	ESL Level 2

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Figure 4

Excerpts from first essays on defining goals
(written during first week of cycle)

"First of all I should learn English hard and finish my homework on time. Secondly, I must try to speak more English anytime and go to Bunker Hill Community College's Learning Center discussion group once a week. Finally, I am determined to overcome the barriers that stopped me from learning. I'll watch TV, listen to the radio tape and read newspaper's news every day. If I have any questions, I'll ask the teacher and classmates. I hope after finish the class my English will move into a new level. I'll be a college student soon."

"At public occasions I was unable to express my idea. I felt that I was almost a person with a mouth that could not speak and ears that could not hear. Now I face a big change...The teacher encourages us with a sentence "A journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step." Confidence is to trust myself. Confidence will bring infinite strength...I know everybody had peaks and valleys in the life. I seem like to be in my valleys now. I have got to have patience and faith. In this class I learn step by step, word by word. I study time by time. Things are going to turn around for me..."

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Figure 5

When you look at what is in your portfolio, how can you tell your English has improved?

(written during week 17 of a 23 week cycle)

"Since I started learning at this class, I feel my English has improved. Such as when I watch TV and listen to the radio, I can understand more than before. And also I have more confidence to talk with other people. Such as when I go outside I can talk with someone and on the telephone."

"I am working on grammar, writing, essays, reading, idiom and comprehension in ESL Transitional Program. I visited Bunker Hill Learning Center once a week discussion group and worked on the computer...I have improved my English a lot...I can talk English with American people at work. My reading and writing skills are also better than before."

"The time passed very fast, our study is almost finished. When I reviewed my achievement, I found that I made great progress in my English studies.

For instance, my reading skill is improving. I read the newspaper, letters and books more often than before, and my writing is improving too. Although I feel writing is still difficult for me, but I still keep doing it, after I finish each essay I feel very happy...

I'm very sorry that the class end very soon, and we'll go to Bunker Hill College to continue our study, it will be another exciting day!"

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Assessment in California

Implementing Alternative Assessment Tools

by
Byron Barahona

Alameda County Library
Adult Literacy Program,
Fremont, California

I would like to start by expressing my appreciation for all the work and ideas of those involved in the creation of this journal, especially to teachers who contributed articles and alternative assessment tools. I would like to offer my response to the tools presented in previous journals and particularly how they have been adapted to address the needs of the learning environment where I teach. Moreover, I will attempt to conceptualize the extent to which the journals have affected and influenced my vision of assessment.

It is important to mention, however, that *all* the different ideas shown in the journals made me evaluate my notion of assessment and functioned to create and implement mechanisms that may enable me to evaluate learners' progress more efficiently and accurately. The range of issues oscillates from diagnosing problems and needs to measuring the process of learning. Some tools were not particularly applicable, yet they acted as elicitors to analyzing and measuring the effectiveness of the different assessment tools presented.

The California Program

The adult literacy program I work in is located in Alameda County, northern California. This program operates with volunteers who commit to tutor ABE or ESL students for two to four hours a week for a minimum of six months. These tutors are first trained by our staff for 18 hours. Students or adult learners who come to this program are expected to be able to focus more on reading and writing. Likewise, ESL students are expected to have a minimum level of conversational English and some basic knowledge of English structure.

As the number of students and tutors grows, there's also an increasing need to find more adequate means to maintain records of students' progress. This need has led to pursuing new and more diverse assessment tools. In this search, *Adventures in Assessment* journals have been timely for pedagogical concern and key to the success of reaching this goal, for both articles and assessment tools found in the journals pose important questions.

First and foremost, they make us — practitioners — think and rethink the need and the process involved in evaluating progress. Second, they make us look back to analyze more critically what has been done.

Third, they help us to reflect upon what can be changed, adapted or implemented. Finally, while there is a large degree of accountability in the process, there is also an attempt to withdraw from the notion that only standardized tests can accurately provide the information needed. This balance is essential since both students and tutors or teachers want and need to know what progress has been made.

The following are some of the tools

that have been incorporated into the tutor training. The selection was rather difficult to make because the options were many and of important value. However, due to the nature of our program we are unable to expect extensive and more comprehensive assessment from the tutors. Thus, while there was a clear attempt to limit the amount of assessment tools, much effort was put to incorporate the most appropriate tools. Now let's look at some of the alternative tools chosen.

The progress profile, discussed in Lucille Fandel's article *"Getting in Touch: Participants Goals and issues'* (November 1991), is a good example of a tool that actively engages the learner. It has the power to pose questions only students may be able to answer. It calls for reflection in a manner that goes beyond the general desire of simply wanting to improve writing and readings skills. In a Progress Profile the learner is invited to think about what she or he wants to learn, why, and its feasibility. Once these three steps are completed, there is the opportunity to stop and reflect on its effectiveness along the process and finally to evaluate how far the student has succeeded in achieving his/her goal. As a result learners should be able to recognize their responsibility in the learning process and to diagnose what the next step is. Also very important in this assessment tool is that there is a genuine attempt to involve both student and tutor in the decision making process.

At our program the *Progress Profile* has been well received by staff members who predict tutors may be eager to try it out because of its compact size yet fairly comprehensive format. In the past, learners made progress, but there was no systematic mechanism to measure that progress and the process involved.

The *Read/Write/Now Adult Learning Center Assessment Adventures portfolio* by Janet Kelly (November 1991 and May 1992, *Adventures in Assessment*) has also been well received at our program. It would be practically impossible to absorb all the different and valuable tools that this center has created. Therefore, a limited number of tools have been chosen to be used. Since we operate with volunteers who tutor no more than four hours per week, it is necessary to create an effective assess-ment system that does not require a tremendous amount of time to implement. Our volunteers work full time jobs for the most part so the program is very careful not to take too much time evaluating progress and to expect unrealistic goals. In addition, in the process of selecting tools modifications were made in order to adapt such tools to particular needs and aspects of the program. The following is a list of what was considered to be suitable for our program: Book List, Looking at Your Own Reading Behavior, Reading Conference Record, Teacher Log, Learner's Log, Goals List, Reading Progress Checklist, and the Writing Progress Checklist.

At our program the Progress Profile *has been well received by staff members who predict tutors may be eager to try it out because of its compact size yet fairly comprehensive format. In the past, learners made progress, but there was no systematic mechanism to measure that progress and the process involved.*

We have adapted the above tools and presented them to tutors, to provide them with different options. In principle, tutors are expected to test them out and then decide what works for them given that each tutoring situation is different from one another.

Taking into account that there might be a tendency to not use the above assessment tools, we have tried to consolidate all the different options into our current monthly report that hopefully would allow us to perceive how learners are progressing.

Here is 1hat our tool kit or portfolio looks like after adaptations and revisions.

The idea to ask learners to think about how *they read seemed appropriate to us. It encourages learners to think critically about how they confront a given text or reading.*

Reading List. We changed Kelly's *Book List* to *Reading List* because most of our students (both ABE and ESL) do not necessarily read complete books. Instead, they concentrate on shorter pieces of readings. The reasons are obvious. Reading a complete book in class or for class would require a long period of time. Nor are all our students able to read complete books. Even those who can may still need a lot of time to finish a book. Therefore this would limit other class activities that are also necessary to develop and enhance their reading and writing skills.

Nevertheless, the rationale was very much appreciated among our staff. Students do need to gain a sense of accomplishment. This is therefore a good way to keep track of whatever reading occurs in and outside of class as well as registering achievements.

Reading Behavior Checklist. The idea to ask learners to think about *how* they read seemed appropriate to us. It encourages learners to think critically about how they confront a given text or reading. The questions posed are essential in order to elucidate important reading issues, for learners — ideally — will be stimulated to discover and reinvent their own reading strategies. Taking into consideration the level of difficulty that some of these questions may have for some learner whose reading and writing skills are not that developed, it was decided to simplify them and to incorporate most of the questions into the monthly report (see the attached monthly report; this report is still in process).

Reading Conference Record. Once again the basic principle behind this tool was well received. Keeping a record of questions, observations and reflections about sustained readings enables teachers to understand problems and successes learners may have in reading. A minor modification to this form had to be done where it says *"BooK Read."* Instead we put "Reading" for the same reasons indicated in the Reading List.

Teacher's Log. This is an essential assessment tool. It allows the teacher to maintain a conspicuous and adequate record of classroom issues. This way teachers do not have to look for notes scattered all around desks filled with papers, etc. The advantage is that teachers and tutors can immediately register difficulties, concerns, and new interests learners may have. Nothing has been changed in this tool and tutors are strongly encouraged to use it. Some of our staff members are currently using this tool as well. It can be noted that continual review and analysis of these notes can lead to properly addressing learners' needs.

Learner's Log. The Learner's Log is another essential assessment tool. It helps the learner maintain a good record of what he or she views as improvement in their reading and writing skills. This is very important for teachers because it will help us see what students consider important indications or markers of progress and what part of instruction has had a significant impact.

In the same way, the Learning Diary by Johan Uvin (November 1991) has been incorporated. Although it is similar to the previous one, it was included because it addresses issues that pertain to ESL students.

Spelling Self Test. This is not necessarily a striking spelling device, but important to the extent that students can test their spelling on their own and concentrate on words whose spelling they need to review immediately.

Goals List. Asking learners to identify their goals for learning is unquestionably very important. Currently we use a tool that has been designed by the California Department of Education (Bureau of Adult Literacy) called CALPEP, California Adult Learner Progress Evaluation. Although most of the goals listed in the Read/Write Goals List are the same as CALPEP's, there are items in the latter that could be incorporated to CALPEP, including Personal Goals: 1,2,5,8,16,17; Family: 1; Community: 2; Work: 2, 5, 8; and Educational Goals: all.

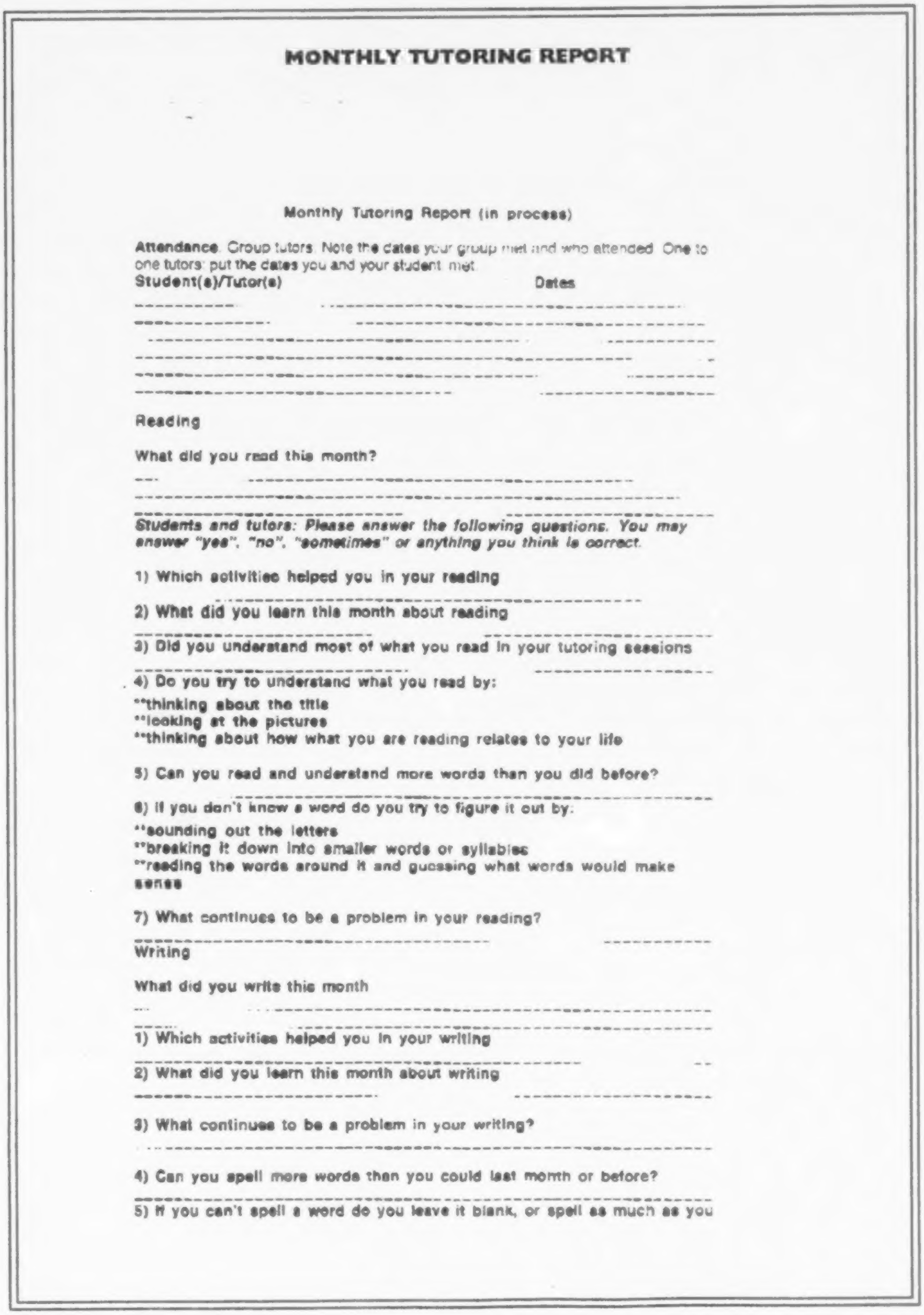
The last two assessment tools I found of tremendous value are the Reading Progress Checklist and the Writing Progress Checklist. These tools were not incorporated into the portfolio to be used by tutors. Some of the points raised in them, however, have been incorporated into the monthly report. In addition, I have decided to use them for the following reasons. First, both the reading and writing checklist allow me to register specific reading and writing issues, such as how well learners understand in-class readings, participation, ability to select topics to write about, etc. Second, I could look at this information periodically to gain an understanding of which areas learners are improving in and which ones continue to be problematic. Overall, what I find even more valuable is that all the different assessment tools tackle different problems in ways that might normally be overlooked. In this portfolio there is an opportunity to deal with every learning issue in its own sphere and consequently the level of learner's success may increase more rapidly.

Finally, another tool that attracted our attention was the *Listening Progress Tool* described in *Letter from Uruguay*, Volume 4. This is an ingenious adaptation of some of the tools which appeared in previous issues of this journal. We found it to be quite relevant to the work we do with the ESL students. We thought this would be a very good way to measure how ESL students do in the outside world.

We consider that progress in reading and writing leads to progress in learners' ability to communicate outside the classroom. The Listening Progress Tool addresses this issue quite well, so it was decided to incorporate it into the monthly report. As usual changes have been made, but the basic principle remains the same (see monthly report).

We consider that progress in reading and writing leads to progress in learners' ability to communicate outside the classroom. The Listening Progress Tool addresses this issue quite well, so it was decided to incorporate it into the monthly report.

To conclude I want to add that looking back to evaluate assessment tools requires a great amount of effort, reading, understanding, adapting, changing and applying new ideas. Now, given that student populations change over time as do learners' interests, it seems essential to evaluate ongoing assessment practices more often than is usually done. If not to change, at least to reaffirm that what is being done is still relevant and applicable. Yet, there is always room for improvement and change. How apprehensively and efficiently we do this will determine the success of our work. Students' progress will to some extent reflect such effort. With this in mind, the Alameda County Library Adult Literacy Program gave me the task to investigate alternative assessment tools and look at the different options I found in *Adventures in Assessment* journals. In this article I wanted to share the result of this process and our appreciation for the valuable ideas that enriched our assessment practices.



MONTHLY TUTORING REPORT

Monthly Tutoring Report (in process)

Attendance. Group tutors: Note the dates your group met and who attended. One to one tutors: put the dates you and your student met.

Student(s)/Tutor(s) **Dates**

Reading

What did you read this month?

Students and tutors: Please answer the following questions. You may answer "yes", "no", "sometimes" or anything you think is correct.

1) Which activities helped you in your reading

2) What did you learn this month about reading

3) Did you understand most of what you read in your tutoring sessions

4) Do you try to understand what you read by:

****thinking about the title**
****looking at the pictures**
****thinking about how what you are reading relates to your life**

5) Can you read and understand more words than you did before?

6) If you don't know a word do you try to figure it out by:

****sounding out the letters**
****breaking it down into smaller words or syllables**
****reading the words around it and guessing what words would make sense**

7) What continues to be a problem in your reading?

Writing

What did you write this month

1) Which activities helped you in your writing

2) What did you learn this month about writing

3) What continues to be a problem in your writing?

4) Can you spell more words than you could last month or before?

5) If you can't spell a word do you leave it blank, or spell as much as you

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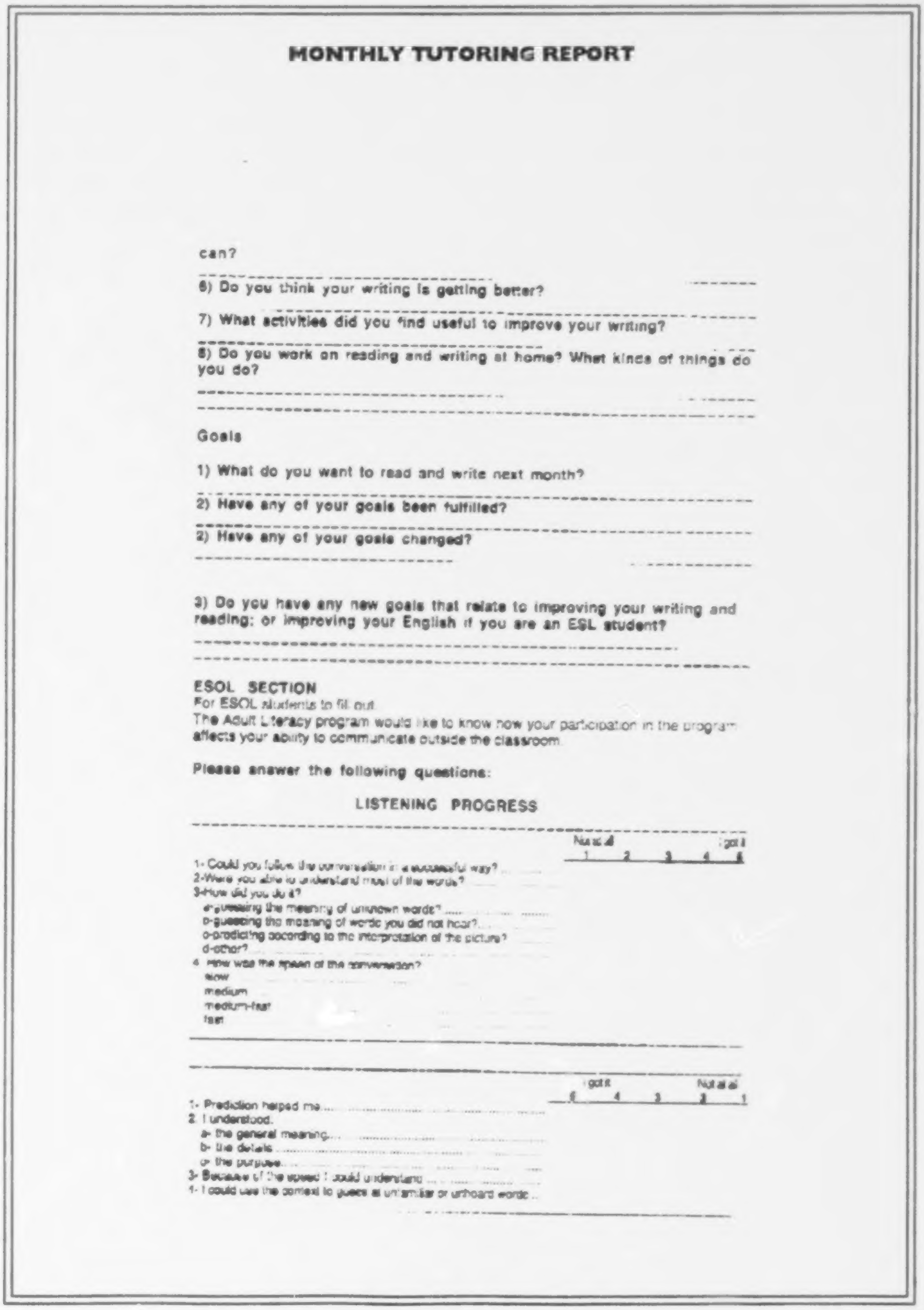

MONTHLY TUTORING REPORT

can?

6) Do you think your writing is getting better?

7) What activities did you find useful to improve your writing?

8) Do you work on reading and writing at home? What kinds of things do you do?

Goals

1) What do you want to read and write next month?

2) Have any of your goals been fulfilled?

2) Have any of your goals changed?

3) Do you have any new goals that relate to improving your writing and reading; or improving your English if you are an ESL student?

ESOL SECTION

For ESOL students to fill out.

The Adult Literacy program would like to know how your participation in the program affects your ability to communicate outside the classroom.

Please answer the following questions:

LISTENING PROGRESS

Not at all … I got it
1 2 3 4 5

1- Could you follow the conversation in a successful way?
2-Were you able to understand most of the words?
3-How did you do it?
  a-guessing the meaning of unknown words?
  b-guessing the meaning of words you did not hear?
  c-predicting according to the interpretation of the picture?
  d-other?
4- How was the speed of the conversation?
  slow
  medium
  medium-fast
  fast

I got it … Not at all
5 4 3 2 1

1- Prediction helped me
2. I understood.
  a- the general meaning
  b- the details
  c- the purpose
3- Because of the speed I could understand
4- I could use the context to guess at unfamiliar or unheard words

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An Analysis of Adventures in Assessment

Images of Participatory Assessment in Adult Education

by
Cathy Luna

Instructor, University Reading/Study Improvement Service

As a sometime adult literacy practitioner particularly interested in alternative assessment, reading through all five issues of *Adventures in Assessment* felt akin to attending a dream conference. The forty-odd articles in these journals, all written by adult literacy practitioners and program staff, offer a dazzling variety of assessment ideas, tools and procedures, as well as the stories behind their development and ongoing revision.

A bi-annual journal, *Adventures in Assessment* is edited by Loren McGrail and published by SABES, the Massachusetts System for Adult Basic Education Support. Each edition begins with an introduction by McGrail, and includes articles written by practitioners working in a wide variety of contexts, including workplace, ESL, family literacy, ABE and GED programs. Most pieces include samples of specific forms, checklists, questionnaires, surveys or interview questions, along with a narrative explaining the process of developing, using and, often, revising these tools. The idea behind the publication is that it "will become a resource by and for practitioners to select and adapt tools for their own contexts" (McGrail, AiA, Vol. 1, p. ii).

The first three volumes of *Adventures in Assessment* are entitled "Getting Started," "Ongoing" and "Looking Back, Starting Again," representing three "stages" in learner and program assessment. According to the cover page of Volume 4, "the first three volumes of *Adventures in Assessment* present a comprehensive view of the state of practice in Massachusetts." The fourth volume contains articles in all three categories, and Volume 5 (October 1993), called "The Tale of the Tools," includes reflective pieces written by practitioners who were involved in Component Three of the Greater Opportunities in Adult Learner Success (G.O.A.L.S) Project developed by the Massachusetts Bureau of Adult Education. Although the original intention of the G.O.A.L.S. Project was to "investigate and design an accountability system which would be a true reflection of the field" (Whiton, AiA, Vol. 5, p. 10), these articles demonstrate, instead, practitioners' commitment to developing alternative assessments whose purpose is primarily informing learners and instruction rather than funders. The result is an incredibly rich collection of "tales" of alternative assessment.

What makes *Adventures in Assessment* especially intriguing and useful is the journal's unifying purpose, which, as McGrail writes in the introduction to Volume One, is "to explore participatory assessment or learner-centered approaches to assessment and evaluation" (McGrail, AiA, Vol. 1, p. ii). Citing Lytle (1991), McGrail identifies key features of participatory adult education and assessment. "The most important principle,"

The practitioners in Adventures in Assessment *recognize that traditional methods of assessing learners and programs cannot support their commitment to these new ways of thinking about adult learners and literacy learning. Instead, the participatory images of assessment they present move towards a redefinition of assessment as learning.*

she writes, "is that assessment be done with the learner and not to the learner" (p. ii). Specifically, "[p]articipatory assessment means a collaborative relationship among learners and program staff in determining the goals, texts and contexts of assessment, as well as in judging its outcomes" (p. ii).

This focus on participatory assessment reflects a wider paradigm shift in adult education. McGrail begins her introduction to Volume One with a quote from Lytle (1991) which reveals the interconnected aspects of this shift:

> Constructing new images of adults—images built on assumptions of dignity and competence, of literacy as reflective and self-critical practice, and of learning as participatory—requires that we rethink or reconceptualize not only our notions of what counts as literacy but also our methods of inquiry—the processes we use to document and assess learning (Cited in McGrail, 1991, p. ii).

The practitioners in *Adventures in Assessment* recognize that traditional methods of assessing learners and programs cannot support their commitment to these new ways of thinking about adult learners and literacy learning. Instead, the participatory images of assessment they present move towards a redefinition of assessment as learning. Lytle and Wolfe (1989) write that "[a]lthough various approaches assess literacy as skills, tasks and practices, only participatory approaches have the potential for assessing literacy as critical reflection" (p. 58). Perhaps this is because taking an active role in assessing oneself and one's world results in the "internal change of consciousness" which Brookfield argues is central to self-directed learning: "This consciousness involves an appreciation of the contextuality of knowledge and an awareness of the culturally constructed form of value frameworks, belief systems and moral codes that influence behavior and the creation of social structures" (Cited in Robishaw, AiA, Vol. 5, p. 94). There is a cyclical relationship between action and reflection, and taking an active role in assessment is part of that cycle: "In the course of this recurring cycle of action and reflection, according to Brookfield, learners become more proactive, assume control over goal setting, and determine personally meaningful criteria for evaluating their learning" (Lytle, 1991, p. 118). Thus, a definition of literacy as critical reflection leads to a reconceptualization of assessment as participatory and as a part of learning. And, similarly, reports of "experiments" with more participatory assessment practices may help practitioners, learners and researchers better understand the nature of critical reflection in adult education.

Recognizing the centrality of the active involvement of adult learners in participatory assessment practices, McGrail and the practitioners contributing to *Adventures in Assessment* seek to reconceptualize assessment by upsetting the traditional roles of "teachers" and students." In particular, they make a commitment to look for ways to involve adult learners in the development, use and revision of the tools and processes used to assess learner progress and to evaluate adult literacy classes and programs. What does it look like when adult literacy practitioners attempt to make assessment practices participatory? What new images of assessment and possibilities for learner participation emerge in these articles, and what questions and issues do they raise?

Possibilities for Participatory Assessment Practices

Figure 1 illustrates some examples of the roles learners are asked to take on in the assessment practices described in *Adventures in Assessment*. These practices can be categorized as 'initial', 'ongoing' and 'looking back' assessments of learner progress (McGrail, AiA, Vol. 1), assessments of classes and programs, and learner participation in the development and revision of assessments. To help illuminate the participatory aspects of these practices and some of the questions they raise, I will relate them to three of the "general features" of learner-centered or participatory assessment practices that Lytle observes emerging from other "grassroots research and staff development projects" (Lytle, 1988, p. 3):

> *(1) Adults are active participants, co-investigators in determining and describing their own literacy practices, strengths and strategies. Whether initiated by an administrator, teacher/tutor, or by adults themselves, the design and implementation of the procedures constitute a dialogue or collaboration. (Lytle, 1988, p. 3)*

The initial assessment practices described in Figure 1 (next two pages) illustrate adults co-investigating their own literacies through discussion, reading and writing. In contrast to the traditional role of test taker and recipient of expert diagnoses, these adult learners are asked to generate or choose their own goals, answer questions based on their own knowledge of their abilities and interests, and even "place" themselves into classes through a process of self evaluation and discussion with staff. Rosen (AiA, Vol. 2) writes about a portfolio assessment process that asks students to choose not only the contents, but also the purpose and audience for their portfolio; this illustrates a practice that encourages adult learners to describe themselves in their own terms.

Several practitioners raise concerns about what it might mean to ask learners to describe their progress.

Several practitioners raise concerns about what it might mean to ask learners to describe their progress, however. Isserlis, working with ESL learners, worries that "[f]or learners with little prior schooling or from cultures where teachers dictate what happens in a classroom, the concept of self-assessment may be difficult to grasp. Surely, many learners have an innate sense of their own movement with language and literacy, but the expression/ verbalization of that progress may not be within the frameworks they have developed or use in describing learning" (AiA, Vol. 2. p. 6). Isserlis supports her concern with examples of learners' very general answers to survey questions such as "What do you think you learned this year?" Often, she believes, the answers to such questions (e.g. "Before I understand nothing. now I understand small") reflect learners' modesty, cultural background, or desire to show appreciation to the teacher, rather than revealing an awareness of specific progress. While, Isserlis writes, "there is value in the process of asking questions about how learners learn and about how they feel they are progressing...[t]his talk about learning...is somewhat of a language of

FIGURE 1: SOME EXAMPLES OF PARTICIPATORY ASSESSMENT PRACTICES FROM *ADVENTURES IN ASSESSMENT*

Figure 1
Some Examples of Participatory Assessment Practices from Adventures in Assessment

Part 1: Learner Self Assessment

Assessment Practice	Learner Role in Assessment	Article
INITIAL		
• Pre-goal setting group reflection	Reflect as a group on past schooling and life experiences; create timeline of past and future life events.	Urban Corps Expansion Proj. Vol. 4
• Goal setting	Generate goals in answer to open-ended written or oral questions, select goals from a "Goals List," or prioritize goals generated as a group.	Kelly, Vol. 1 Ebbit, et al Vol. 2
• Reading Assessment	Choose learner writing to read and discuss Answer questions such as "Does this reading level feel too hard or too easy?"	Barry Vol. 4
• Class placement	Complete learning questionnaires, a self-evaluatory math sheet, self-selected reading/writing activities, and discussion with staff - then "place" self.	Trunnel Vol. 2
ONGOING		
• Shared teacher logs	Read and write in shared observation log Use teacher observations as data for self-reflection	Kelly Vol. 5
• Learning Logs	Keep record of what accomplished Record frustrations, questions, goals See what you know thru writing	Trunnel Vol. 5 Gear Vol. 5
• Writing Process Checklist	Fill in checklist with teacher to record writing strategies used	Kelly Vol. 2
LOOKING BACK		
• Portfolios	Choose audience, purpose, design for portfolio to reflect learning	Rosen Vol. 2

Assessment Practice	Learner Role in Assessment	Article

FIGURE 1: SOME EXAMPLES OF PARTICIPATORY ASSESSMENT PRACTICES FROM *ADVENTURES IN ASSESSMENT*

Figure 1. Cont.'d
Some Examples of Participatory Assessment Practices from Adventures in Assessment

Part 2: Learner Assessment of Classes & Programs, and Learner Participation in Developing & Revising Assessment Practices

Assessment Practice	Learner Role in Assessment	Article
CLASS EVALUATION		
• Weekly and End of Cycle Written Evaluations	List class' weekly activities and rate them Answer questions such as "Which activities were most useful and why?" For final evaluation, answer questions such as "If you were the instructor, what would you do differently?"	Gear Vol. 5
PROGRAM EVALUATION		
• Town Meeting	In groups, give feedback & suggestions to program staff.	Cason Vol. 3
• Questionnaire	Students on Advisory Board create questionnaire w/staff for other students about the program. All student responses are considered in action plan developed by staff.	Reddy Vol. 3
DEVELOPMENT OF ASSESSMENT PRACTICES		
• Creation of Organizational Assessment System for New Program	Serve on Advisory Board with staff & share assessment preferences as part of initial intake process.	Uvin Vol. 1
REVISION OF ASSESSMENT PRACTICES		
• Individual Feedback on Assessment Practices	One student discusses value of specific assessment practices to her with teacher	Barry Vol. 5

its own and must be learned as (yet another) language" (p. 8). Isserlis' comments focus practitioners again on a central question: Who is assessment for? One hope is that learning the kind of "metalanguage" needed to talk about changes in their reading/writing strategies, for example, is part of a more general process of critical reflection and growth. McGrail points out that this might be true for everyone:

> All of us—administrators, counselors, teachers and students—find it difficult to talk about literacy and language development beyond talking about skills. We are all new to thinking about learning as a process and not just a product. What Isserlis claims is true for many learners... is probably true for practitioners as well. We are just beginning to develop our own framework and don't always know how to translate our thoughts, hunches, and ideas about what constitutes progress into practice, tools and procedures that measure and document what we believe to be real indicators of growth and change" (AiA, Vol. 3, p. vi).

Perhaps the process of working together to learn a 'language' with which to assess ourselves is inseparable from 'growth and change.'

Perhaps the process of working together to learn a 'language' with which to assess ourselves is inseparable from 'growth and change.' One caveat to this, however, is that we need to make sure that learners are not stifled or silenced in this process. This might mean encouraging learners to use their first language or other, nonverbal modes of communication as they take part in this process of assessment/literacy learning. The overarching question we are left with is one of communication and collaboration: In what ways can practitioners and learners talk and work together to build frameworks for critical reflection and assessment?

Practitioner/authors in *Adventures in Assessment* report less involvement of learners in the design and revision of the assessment practices they discuss than in their implementation. While most of the authors relate that they revise assessment practices based on learners' reactions to them in the classroom, only a few report involving learners in the initial design of assessment practices (Uvin, AiA, Vol. 1) or asking for explicit feedback on the usefulness of particular practices to learners (Barry, AiA, Vol. 5). In Volume 5, however, several authors look closely at what assessment practices have taught them about particular learners and find themselves wanting to know more about "how learners experience learning" (McGrail, AiA, Vol. 5, p.5). Trunnel, for example, investigates the contents of two students' portfolios and evaluates the usefulness of various assessment tools. He realizes, though, that he cannot do this alone: "All this is fine. But what is helpful FOR THE STUDENT?" (AiA, Vol. 5, p. 46). In her piece (co-authored by Pat F., her student), Barry (AiA, Vol. 5) asks Pat which assessment tools she finds useful. Barry's report of their discussion represents a needed movement towards learner involvement in designing, revising, and reporting on new assessment practices and, ultimately, in building new frameworks.

(2) Rather than adhering too strictly to a predetermined script, learner-centered assessment involves dynamic exchanges among learners, texts and teachers/tutors. When difficulties are encountered, assistance is given rather than withheld; the social situation provides a supportive context for

experimentation and risk-taking (Lytle, 1988, p.3).

Practices such as asking learners to choose which texts to read during initial placement interviews contradict the rigidity of traditional tests. Other practices that illustrate 'dynamic exchanges' include open-ended self and course evaluation questions, 'town meetings' (Cason, AiA, Vol. 3) and shared teacher logs (Kelly, AiA, Vol. 5). The idea of a practitioner sharing the anecdotal records she keeps about students represents an important shift in assessment roles; rather than being the evaluator of students' progress, the practitioner who shares her observations about students becomes a co-investigator, and her students can use her perspective as data for self-reflection. This would also seem to change the power relationships in the classroom, contributing to a "supportive environment for experimentation." While only one practitioner reports having worked on ways to share teacher log entries with students (Kelly, AiA, Vol. 5, p. 20) several others note in their articles that they are interested in this idea.

Asking learners for feedback about programs and classes and then acting on that feedback is another practice that supports open exchanges and risk-taking on the part of both learners and practitioners. One inspiring example of this is Cason's report of the all program 'town meetings' held by the ESL learners and practitioners at the Log School in Dorchester, Mass. Teachers provided questions as a springboard for two group discussions which resulted in concrete changes in the program. These changes included adding drop-in tutoring times, instituting a different attendance policy and including current students in orientation programs for incoming learners (Cason, AiA, Vol. 2, p. 13). Less tangible results of the meetings, according to Cason, included building the program's sense of community, and involving students in leadership roles outside of the classroom. In addition, Cason believes that the meetings helped learners envision the ESL program as a part of a larger community, and that this new vision encouraged them to see community issues, such as neighborhood safety, as "legitimate topics of action and discussion in ESL class" (p. 14). The open-ended dynamics of the town meetings seem to have been a springboard for further action for both learners and practitioners.

Asking learners for feedback about programs and classes and then acting on that feedback is another practice that supports open exchanges and risk-taking on the part of both learners and practitioners.

(3) What's assessed reflects the particular goals of learners and often includes (a) literacy practices in everyday life (how adults are using what they've learned and what significance these things have in their lives), (b) varieties of tasks and strategies for reading and writing particular texts in specific contexts, as well as (c) learners' perceptions or theories of reading and writing (Lytle, 1988, p.4).

I will discuss the implications of asking learners to set goals later in this paper; in terms of the range of what is being assessed by the practices documented here, however, many of the goal setting questions and activities described in *Adventures in Assessment* do ask learners to think about the ways they use literacy in their lives and about the ways they think about reading and writing.

Along with assessing what learners accomplish in relation to their language/literacy goals, practitioners express interest in assessing other aspects of growth, including changes in learner self-esteem, confidence, and community building.

For example, Ebbit, et al. (AiA, Vol. 2) describe a goal setting process during which "students prioritize, in pairs or as a group, the language survival areas they would like to explore in their ESL class" (p. 50). The Read/Write/Now placement interview form asks adult learners to consider their most important reasons for wanting to learn to read and write (AiA, Vol. 1, p. 20), and their questionnaire, "Looking at Your Own Reading Behavior" asks learners to answer questions such as "Do you ask yourself questions when you read?" (Appendix 10).

Along with assessing what learners accomplish in relation to their language/literacy goals, practitioners express interest in assessing other aspects of growth, including changes in learner self-esteem, confidence, and community building. This interest seems to spring from an expanded notion of what constitutes growth and learning and from a desire to help learners see the progress they are making in all of these facets of their lives. While these aspects of growth are not generally ones that are captured in learners' initial written goals, practitioners report that these kinds of changes are often the ones that learners themselves notice and value when they occur.

Barry, for example, writes that her student Pat "highlighted the value of teaching and learning from [classmates], and developing a sense of responsibility towards each other" (AiA, Vol. 5, 80). Discussing Pat's enthusiastic comments about having her work published and offering a workshop to other teachers and students, Barry writes, "The importance of recording these kinds of comments is obvious to me. This is the data which reflects development of self-esteem and self doubt. It is my hope that by recording segments of conversation with students, over time, I will gather a true reflection of their views of themselves as learners" (p. 79).

She then goes on to write that she has heard of another teacher who shared this data with learners through her teachers log, and comments, "I hope to make my log available so that, just as with the other assessment tools, the log is not a device for a teacher to measure a student's progress, but a method through which learners can assess their own growth."(p. 79). Barry's thoughts on the importance of sharing the information she collects about learners emphasize that the primary purpose of this kind of information should be to inform learner self-assessment and not to convince funders of a program's viablity; uses of this kind of information which do not include the learner bypass the opportunity for critical reflection and therefore seem unproductive, if not exploitative.

This conclusion raises the question, though, of what kind of information about learner progress *should* be used for accountability purposes. Comings, in a letter in Vol. 3 of *Adventures in Assessment*, argues that learner assessment should not be used for program evaluation:

> Using student assessment as the measure of effectiveness for program accountability, no matter how good the assessment tool, will always make the test result the focus of programs, rather than the needs of the student. Funding agencies do have a legitimate right to measure the effectiveness of the programs they fund. But, looking

> at student progress does not necessarily provide a way to judge whether or not money is being well spent" (p. 43).

Comings argues instead that programs should be judged against "standards of practice and service, " following the accreditation model used by colleges and universities (p. 44). Such a model might free practitioners and learners to focus less on measuring and documenting learner progress for others and more on making sure learners have opportunities for self assessment and critical reflection.

Overall, the participatory assessment practices described in *Adventures in Assessment* demonstrate a range of learner roles that are characterized by action, reflection and decision-making. They involve learners in generating goals, making choices, assessing their own progress, providing feedback and bringing about change.

The image of learners that informs and results from these practices is very different from the image inspired by traditional assessments that focus on uncovering deficits and prescribing remediation. Instead of the picture of a passive adult learner who waits for someone else to tell her what she needs to learn and then "gives" her that needed knowledge, these assessment practices paint portraits of adults who come to programs with valuable experience and knowledge and with their own agendas. As Lytle (1988) writes, "these new approaches to assessment communicate respect for adults — for what they bring to learning and for what they come to learn" (p. 3).

The practitioners writing about these new approaches raise many important questions about their own assumptions and about their hopes and fears for the future of participatory adult education and assessment. Reading through these journals, I hear a conversation among practitioners, one that often focuses on what to do next. In order to further clarify this conversation and to contribute some ideas towards next steps, I will discuss one assessment practice that many of these practitioner/authors write about: asking learners to set goals.

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Learners Setting Goals

One possibility for learner participation in initial and ongoing assessment that is advocated by almost every author is learner goal setting. According to McGrail, a key principle of alternative assessment is that "it should help the learner achieve his or her goals. In other words, what is assessed must reflect what the learner wishes or needs to accomplish" (AiA, Vol 1, p. 3). This assumption leads to practices designed to help learners uncover and articulate their initial and ongoing goals. In an ESL class, this might take the form of learners drawing maps to show where want to be able to use English (Fandel, AiA, Vol. 1). In a class for adult beginning readers and writers, it might involve checking off goals from a Goals List created by practitioners (often collected from past learners) or answering more open-ended questions such as "What are some things that you want to do that being able to read and write better will help you do?" (Kelly, AiA, Vol. 1). Some programs ask learners to generate or choose these goals independently, while others set up group discussion or conversations with teachers for the purpose of setting goals.

A variety of goals are suggested by the goals lists; these are often categorized under titles such as "Personal," "Family," "Work," "Community," and "Academic" (see Vol. 1, appendices 8, 15, 18 & 20). Such categories reflect a definition of literacy as practices and an understanding that adults' literacies are multiple and context-specific. Examples of goals from one checklist include: "To read a phone book", "To write notes to school", "To register to vote", "Punctuation", and "To tell time" (Germanowski, AiA, Vol. 1, Appendix 17). Illustrative of the few learner goal statements that were included in articles (most presented blank rather than completed forms) are statements such as "Understanding bigger words," "To write letters to friends and family," and "I will like can speak English to be a beautician" (Fandel).

Learner goals are usually "revisited" both during and at the end of class cycles; clearly, many practitioners see learner involvement in setting, meeting and revising goals as a valuable assessment practice.

In many classes, learners are asked to record their goals and then monitor their progress towards meeting them. Some programs, such as Read/Write/Now (a library-sponsored program for adult beginning readers and writers) also use 'learning contracts' which involve learners in creating a "plan of action" for meeting their stated or chosen goals (Kelly, AiA, Vol. 1). Learner goals are usually "revisited" both during and at the end of class cycles; clearly, many practitioners see learner involvement in setting, meeting and revising goals as a valuable assessment practice.

Indeed, these practitioners consider learner goal setting to be central to participatory education. Goal setting is seen as empowering because it asks learners to identify what *they* want to accomplish and motivating because it encourages them to focus on the progress they make towards their own goals. Kelly articulates this belief in the context of the Read/Write/Now program:

> One of the goals of a whole-language program is to empower learners by helping them to become more self-directed, to identify and work towards their own goals for learning, literacy and life... Both learners and teachers need to know why they do what they do in a classroom so that they can have a sense of progress, as well as make decisions about future directions.
> (AiA, Vol. 1, p.17)

As Kelly's words imply, practitioners also attempt to change power relationships by basing curriculum and instruction on the goals that learners set. For example, in a written 'conversation' with McGrail, Lindy Whiton, coordinator of Component Three (alternative assessment) of the G.O.A.L.S. Project, describes the relationship between goals and curriculum at the Log School (see also Cason, AiA, Vol. 3): "When they get a group of people in, they take those goals...that are the most in common across all learners [and that] is where they start their curriculum....In the end the students do the evaluation: Did your goals get met?" (McGrail and Whiton, AiA, Vol. 3, p. 39-40). Many practitioners describe more individualized processes for using learners' goals to develop curriculum; these might involve using goal sheets to create specific assignments (Gluckman, et. al., AIA, Vol. 3, p. 26) or activity plans (Martin, Hall & Bahre, AIA, Vol. 4, p. 16). One hope is that this kind of learner input will result in a curriculum that directly addresses learners' lives and interests.

In addition to providing learners with inspiration and with input, practitioners regard goal setting as a way to help learners see learning as active and themselves as subjects: "It is impossible to see education as the passive receiving of information from others when, as a learner, you have just written down a plan of action for meeting your own goals in reading and writing, and this plan involves you in doing things, not just listening while a teacher tells you about doing things" (Kelly, AiA, Vol. 1, p. 26). These practitioners' conceptions and uses of learner goal setting as an integral part of assessment reinforce a definition of learning as participatory and of literacy as practices and critical reflection.

In addition to providing learners with inspiration and with input, practitioners regard goal setting as a way to help learners see learning as active and themselves as subjects.

However, some practitioners/ authors also express concerns about the practice of asking adult learners to set goals, concerns centered on the need for cultural sensitivity and for dialogue and negotiation. For example, Don Robishaw (a SABES Research Consultant) sees goal setting as "a linear, future-oriented, individualistic, Western phenomenon which is not always transferable to English as a Second Language (ESL) learners from non-Western cultures and other domestic cultural contexts" (AiA, Vol. 5, p. 93). Writing from the perspective of someone who "grew up in a housing project" and "avoided schooling as much as possible up to the age of sixteen," (p. 93), Robishaw worries that goal setting may be a culturally-specific activity that makes little sense to learners who did not necessarily experience life as that 'controllable' growing up. One assumption that informs participatory education is that many adult literacy learners come to adult education having internalized negative images of themselves as learners (Lytle, 1991); Robishaw sees this as both the problem with goal setting — because these adults don't necessarily believe that they can learn — *and* as a possible solution. He refers to the article, "Group Goal Setting Activities: An Approach from Youth Service Corps" (AiA, Vol. 4), which describes structured *pre*-goal setting discussions in which youth service corpsmembers critically reflect together on their past schooling and life experiences. Robishaw sees this participatory group process as invaluable: "Adult learners need to reflect on their past life history and to sort through their experiences in order to see beyond their own formal schooling experiences in order to better develop, persist and continue with learning" (p. 94-95). Robishaw puts goal setting in the larger context of self-directed learning and reminds us that learners' experiences need to be both the starting place and the medium of a participatory assessment process. He also demonstrates that goal setting needs to be an interactive process, that it is not enough to simply ask learners set goals.

Kelly, writing about the evolution of Read/Write/Now's initial assessment tools and processes, echoes this idea. Citing learner and practitioner frustration with unrealistic or very general goals, Kelly writes about the need for teacher participation in the goal setting process:

> Learning about helping learners to choose goals and trying to empower them as decision-makers in their own learning has been an evolutionary process....We have gone from a stance

> of very limited interference and influence in the learners' decision-making about their educational goals to the role of full participants in a learning community. Full participation means listening to each other, sharing our opinions, knowledge, and advice in the process of negotiating the decisions that we often make together (Kelly, AiA, Vol 1, p. 28).

I can almost 'see' empowerment in the pages of Adventures in Assessment; *learners and teachers both have a voice in the assessment practices that practitioners describe.*

What Kelly is talking about is the balance of power that seems to be at the heart of many practitioners' concerns and questions about participatory assessment. It is important to recognize and acknowledge the fact that most (if not all) practitioners and learners come to adult education with images of "teachers," "students" and "school" that involve unequal power relationships. Participatory education and assessment is about trying to change these relationships, and this is a very difficult task. In a fascinating way, the evolution Kelly describes reveals the dynamics of this struggle. To begin with, practitioners believe that asking adult learners to set their own goals makes sense; they are adults and know what they need out of a class or program. However, when practitioners abdicate their own power by not helping learners do this often unfamiliar task, everyone can end up frustrated. In the end, a participatory approach to goal setting means that both learners and practitioners need to have a voice in the process. *Both* parties need to trust that the other will be honest and explicit about their agenda and will contribute their particular experience and expertise. Empowerment is not something that adult literacy practitioners can give to adult learners; it is, instead, both the process and the product of shared participation and critical reflection.

I can almost 'see' empowerment in the pages of *Adventures in Assessment*; learners and teachers both have a voice in the assessment practices that practitioners describe. In terms of where to go next, the authors in Volume 5 point the way. Practitioners need to invite learners into the conversation about assessment, not just into the assessment practices themselves. I look forward to hearing more from learners about what assessment practices are valuable to them in future issues. I also thank the practitioners who have contributed to *Adventures in Assessment* so far; they have begun a powerful conversation.

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What Counts?

Out of a Pickle: Setting the Stage for Math

by
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In every literacy setting I've worked in, I've wanted to change the rules. The new rules would be: this is a class where evaluation doesn't hurt self-esteem, where learners' knowledge about the world gets counted and woven into the learning at hand, where the work that is done in the class has a purpose or use.

During this past year I worked with 16 ABE Math Team teachers, all intent on changing the rules to make our classes look more like a hands-on math lab of the 21st century. (To read more about our vision and the results of the shifts in math instruction, see *The Massacusetts ABE Math Standards Project Vol. 1 and Vol. 2*.)

Much of the time, adult learners will politely go along with whatever the teacher has in mind. Often the learners who come and stay, however, are empowered enough to ask that the class meet some felt need. How frustrating it is, though, when learners request something reminiscent of the traditional schooling I was working against. And it happens in every setting. The class wants to read orally round robin instead of practicing silent reading. The students in one-to-one want a pure phonics curriculum, the math class wants me to correct their worksheets.

Bonnie Mullinix and the research we did together are responsible for the ideas that have at least temporarily gotten me out of this pickle jar. On an abstract level, the answer is continuing education. We have to educate students to the alternatives. If they haven't heard of dialogue journals or cooperative learning puzzles, I shouldn't be surprised that students aren't asking for them. We have to be clear about our own views and the reasons. But sometimes such a forthright approach doesn't work. I need to make my point concretely without getting on a soapbox, lecturing, or preaching.

Meeting Math Goals

This paper lays out a strategy for familarizing students with a broad view of mathematics, for opening the dialogue about which topics should get covered during math class, and for using assessment as an opportunity to build expectations for a new or continuing class. In this article I am recommending a way to meet these goals. Listen, it's CHEAP – not a lot of materials, not a lot of time. Teachers can add this strategy to a repertoire of ways to create situations in which students become familiar with a wider range of instructional options and are therefore more informed when they exercise their right to choose.

The strategy is simple and could be adapted to serve as an initial classroom assessment, as an interim evaluation to get student feedback on next steps, or as an ongoing or final evaluation to compare students' ideas and comfort with mathematics with their ideas at the beginning of the program.

Topics on Cards

I gave students in pairs or groups of three, a set of twelve cards. I used this Topic on Cards approach three different times. In one case I worked with the whole class. In the other two cases, I asked the teachers to choose two students they thought would be interested.

Each of the twelve cards had a math topic on it. *(See Figures 1-3.)* For example:

> Estimation
> *Guessing about how much something will be*
>
> Whole numbers
> *(Computation)*
> + - x ÷

I simply said, "I'm going to give you a bunch of cards. Each of these cards has a math topic on it. I want you to look through them and put them in order. Put the thing you think is most important on the top. Put what you think is the least important on the bottom."

With basic level readers, I read the topics with them. Usually the topics didn't need elaboration, although I found myself offering some examples. The students needed little else to work on the task.

Some learners did need help working well together. Although there were no stated rules about coming to consensus, I wanted both students in a pair to participate actively. I checked in with the

This activity opened three new doors. A rush of new ideas flowed in to mingle with the typical expectations of math in adult ed.

FIGURE 1
Assessment Cards Used in RABEM Study

Estimation Guessing about how much something will be	**Whole Numbers** Computation + - x +
Fractions	**Decimals**

FIGURE 2
Assessment Cards Used in RABEM Study

Patterns and Relationships	Measurement
Problem Solving	Reasoning Does it make sense?

What if they feel that math will only get harder and be even more tedious than the times tables, or more complicated than adding fractions with different denominators?

quieter student, saying, "Do you agree with that?" or "Didn't you want to keep estimation at the top?" When one student seemed to have lost track of the purpose, I reminded her "This is about your opinion. What do you think is most important for an adult to know? There is no right answer."

Once students had finished and I had recorded the outcome, I asked them to use the same cards to show me "which topics you spend the most time on in class. Put the ones you do the most at the top and the ones you don't do much or barely touch at the bottom." In both tasks, I said that ties between two of the topics were allowed. In other words, two cards could occupy the same place in the order by being positioned side by side.

What Emerged

This activity opened three new doors. A rush of new ideas flowed in to mingle with the typical expectations of math in adult ed. They are:

- Relevance of math to life rather than to the test
- New awareness of the range and breadth of math
- Placement of computation in perspective.

These results are true for all 49 learners Bonnie and I interviewed. I've chosen to focus here on the nine learners I interviewed.

Students cited relevance to life as one criterion for a high ranking. Two of the three groups rated decimals as more important than fractions. One student explained that "if you don't know where that decimal is, you can't tell about how much to expect. In a bank or a store, they could give you forty dollars instead of four hundred. You have to know where that decimal is." Without a secure knowledge of decimals, adults are vulnerable in the world of money. The third group gave decimals and fractions equal importance, but none of the groups invoked the GED as their criteria for importance.

In another instance, measurement was consistently above geometry for all the groups. Though geometry figures on the GED, measurement is a skill called for in daily life. In one class, a learner asked me to explain what geometry is. On reflection, I realized this lack of information is indicative of a much larger gap. **Many adults lack an overall sense of mathematics as a discipline, as an area of study.** I can hear impatient voices asking, why should someone who needs to learn addition and subtraction be burdened with explanations of geometry or calculus? Isn't that jumping the gun?

No, it's not. Our students are consumers of education. It is critical for adults as students, parents, and citizens, to have some sense of the topics that lie ahead of them, the kinds of math their children will study, the disciplines that comprise scientific endeavor. Furthermore, an attitude toward math informed

By the act of choosing problem solving or reasoning in their top five important topics, they commit themselves to learning concepts that will help them in those areas.

FIGURE 3
Assessment Cards Used in RABEM Study

Communication Symbolic, graphic, text How do you read and say different math symbols?	Geometry and Spatial Sense Understanding shapes and spaces
Algebra	Statistics and Probability Collecting and organizing information, reading graphs, etc.

To maximize the open lines of communication about instruction, I would connect what I had planned to do to what the student was asking for.

by limited experience with computation may well have an adverse effect on their drive to learn. If they feel that math will only get harder and be even more tedious than the times tables, or more complicated than adding fractions with different denominators, they'll pace themselves more slowly. Like people anticipating an ordeal, they'll make the tasteless thing they are working on drag on as long as possible. Subconsiously they may hope that time will run out before they have to go on to the next thing, and in the meantime, at least their struggle will be familiar.

I noticed learners initially reach for the Whole Numbers card. One student asked "Where's addition. You're going to need that even if you aren't going to know anything else." **In the course of reviewing the other cards, however, learners began to place whole numbers in perspective.** All three groups pulled communication out and put it on the top. Without an understanding of symbols, you wouldn't know whether to add two numbers or multiply them. Without communication, you couldn't explain your answer, couldn't explain that you'd been given you the wrong change. Without problem solving, "you can't solve the problem; you're lost." The learners were clearly still attached to computation, but they were seeing it in the context of other mathematical skills. Since members of the Math Team and other teachers are experimenting with the math curriculum, I was interested to see that students wouldn't necessarily be wedded to tradition. The responses to this task indicate that learners' expectations of math class can be quite flexible.

Using this Strategy

To adapt this activity for initial or ongoing assessment, I would ask:

Which topics would you like to spend most time on in class? Put the cards in order from most time to least time.

or

Which topics do you think are most important for us to cover during the next cycle?

and

Which topics do you feel most comfortable with? Put those at the top, the least comfortable at the bottom.

I would phrase follow-up questions to get at the thinking behind the order. To maximize the open lines of communication about instruction, I would connect what I had planned to do to what the student was asking for. For example, "I see you want to learn fractions. When you start class, we'll be doing measurement with whole numbers. As we get into it, you'll be able to begin fractions and see how they work using rulers." Or "You said that problem solving is important. We will do that in two ways during math class. We do problems together as a group that you have to talk about (point to communication) and you'll have problems to take home as well."

**The Context:
Where This Activity Comes From**

This activity came about as part of a larger study from February to May, 1993. I worked with Bonnie Mullinix of World Education on the Research into Adult Basic Education Mathematics (RABEM) project sponsored by the Federal Department of Education. The primary purpose of RABEM was to get a really good picture of math instruction in Massachusetts ABE programs. To do that, program coordinators and teachers filled out surveys. Bonnie and I interviewed teachers, observed classes and interviewed students.

One aspect of the larger goal was to figure out where Massachusetts adult ed classes are in relation to the *Curriculum and Evaluation Standards for School Mathematics* published by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. The cards we gave students came in part from the standards NCTM put forth. A few minor changes were made based on teacher interviews which preceded the learner interviews. For example, Number Sense was too vague for teachers, so we left it out of the student interview. A few other changes came from learners themselves. When students from the Jackson-Mann ABE class helped design the learner interview, they identified terms which needed rewording or clarification.

The card part of the learner interview came after we had asked students questions about their instructors, present and past (how do you think your teacher feels about math? how do you know?); to define math (what do you think math is anyway?); and how they liked math (what they liked most and least). While we made no effort to convert anyone to a holistic view of math, the types of questions we asked certainly geared students to think about math from many different angles.

Conclusion

Now when I hear about students' negative response to an innovative math class (like "This isn't math. When are we going to get back to long division?"), I think this kind of exercise would really help. By doing it, students are reminded that math is bigger than the whole number computation they are used to. By the act of choosing problem solving or reasoning in their top five important topics, they commit themselves to learning concepts that will help them in those areas.

The excitement I felt at discovering a successful new strategy to work my way out of a pickle was undoubtedly intensified by the use of a manipulative, in this case, the cards. I suppose some readers may already be planning to turn this idea into a checklist. In this case, a checklist would turn a hands-on activity into a two-dimensional task. It will shut off creative thinking. It will limit ownership because if the teacher holds it, she will retain control and if she gives the page to the student, that act will turn the activity into a written task, like a test, a medium which literacy students generally find nerve-wracking. Cards are more open-ended. The task gives students a chance to be creative in their lay-out and to exhibit their organizational strategies in a way reading and writing assessments don't usually. The cards allow for pyramids, diamonds as well as stairs or a linear arrangement. Because one can talk while moving the cards, they encourage an external thinking process. Physically moving the cards around made the impact of each decision on the order as a whole a visible fact. In one case, learners kept adding topics to

The excitement I felt at discovering a successful new strategy to work my way out of a pickle was undoubtedly intensified by the use of a manipulative, in this case, the cards.

the top of the order and we watched as Algebra, originally placed toward the top sank down further and further. Manipulatives and tactile learning belong in assessment.

The task gives students a chance to be creative in their lay-out and to exhibit their organizational strategies in a way reading and writing assessments don't usually.

As more and more teachers implement the NCTM standards or the Massachusetts ABE Math Standards by emphasizing communication and problem solving with calculators and estimation, some will encounter resistance from their students. Countering student expectations in an understanding and empowering way will be key to a smooth transition to new and fun activities in the classroom. We need to react in ways that will further the adoption of a new way of doing math as well as to reassure students and give them a feeling of control over what is happening in math class. Over the years I've learned that to have a real conversation about what learners want, I need to provide some structure or some scaffolding. Otherwise, I'll hear the internalized messages from a lifetime of encounters with a traditional approach to schooling. It's not fair to ourselves as teachers or to our students as consumers of education to present choices without providing learners with the information they need to make reasoned and informed choices. Topics on cards are one simple strategy. Let's build a repertoire.

☑

From the Field

A Response to AIA; Democracy Begins in Conversation

by
Marilyn Gillespie

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Do I read *Adventures in Assessment*? Yes! Well, I try. Until recently, as the director of the National Clearinghouse on ESL Literacy in Washington, D.C., I received literally stacks of adult-literacy related materials every week—journals, unpublished documents, curricula, textbooks, junk mail. They came from around the United States and a few from as far away as England and Australia. I mention this because this position gave me the opportunity to recognize what a unique forum *Adventures in Assessment* really is. I have found nothing else — either in the U.S. or overseas — quite like it. There are a few journals and newsletters in the field that speak to concerns of teachers, but none I know of engages the writers, readers and responders in the kind of honest, dialogic process *Adventures in Assessment* does.

I'd like to use this occasion to thank all of you who have written for or worked on *Adventures in Assessment* for the tremendous effort that keeping such a work going must have meant. Your experiences have become models not only for teachers looking for information about alternative assessment, but also, I know,for many teachers out there around the country who ask questions about how to make learner-centered and participatory education work for them and who feel lonely and isolated in their own communities. Your articles allow us, as readers, to feel like we are truly in the midst of a conversation about teaching and learning. For me this was especially true of the articles that are followed up in subsequent issues with reflections on how the learners are progressing, which lessons worked or didn't work, and what continues to need to be done. Janet Kelly's articles about being continually reminded of the importance of consistent, frequent, informal communication with the learner, as well as her on-going reflections on various assessment tools that "seemed perfect until put to practical use" is one example. Janet Isserlis' article about her student Rosalie, and the follow-up story, where she describes how Rosalie proudly took the article written about her home to show her family, is another.

I would like to comment on one topic, touched on by John Comings in Volume 3. In his letter he expressed the view that assessment can, at times, be a red herring, drawing attention away from the need for staff and program development. He implied, I believe, among other things, that it would be useful for teachers to direct their attention not only toward what happens inside the classroom with students, but also toward what happens outside the classroom. Massachusetts is a state where some of the most innovative work in staff and program development, as well as assessment, is taking place. Many of the most innovative curricula and assessment tools have had their origins there. Teachers involved in these projects, I believe, could do much for the field if they were to find ways to apply the critical analysis process they use in the classroom outward to examine how institutional supports and constraints affect their work. While "changing the system" in the current social and political climate may seem overwhelming at best, I know there are people—even people in Washington offices, believe me—who would read your observations about your working conditions as teachers with attention and respect. We all know the status of the adult education workforce in the U.S. Most of us struggle for excellence in the classroom as part-time employees with no benefits, no job security, few opportunities for professional development, a lack of coordination among programs, and unrealistic funding guidelines. The teachers who write for *Adventures in Assessment* are in a good position to take up the challenge by reflecting upon how those conditions affect their work and how they might be improved.

Adventures in Assessment is special because, in this fast-paced world, it engages us as teachers and learners in true conversations.

I heard somewhere that when educator John Dewey was asked, toward the end of his life, what he had learned in all his years, his answer was elegant yet simple. "I learned," he said, "that democracy begins in conversation." *Adventures in Assessment* is special because, in this fast-paced world, it engages us as teachers and learners in true conversations. We need to cherish and nourish this activity as a genuine way to support one another as teachers, to improve what happens in the classroom, and to find better ways to include learners in our conversations. But we also need to extend our attentions outward to educate those who hold the power to make decisions about funding for literacy about the working conditions that affect our teaching and our lives.

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Letter

Affirmation for Pre-Goal Setting

I would like to thank Don Robishaw for his insights presented in "The Case for Pre-Goal Setting" article in Volume 5 of *Adventures in Assessment*. More specifically, I appreciated the reminder about not assuming our learners will proceed and succeed through schooling as we did. I also valued the placement of goal-setting strategies within the context of the greater philosophy of self-directed learning. Seeing it within its larger context helps me to reaffirm its value as an empowering tool within my classrooms.

I would like to admit that this article led me to think about goal-setting as a "middle class phenomena" in ways I had not previously. As an ESL teacher, I have had many experiences where my more "middle-class", "linear, future-oriented, individualistic" approach has not facilitated true communication and understanding between me and my students. I have not looked at my goal-setting activities from this perspective, and I valued the opportunity presented in this article.

I have learned a great deal about *angles* of learning, learning as circles and waves, and assumptions behind "knowledge" in working with multicultural students. For years I have felt the struggles between offering my students a learning environment in the forms *they* are used to versus the forms I am used to. There has become a place in me where being discriminatory about learning situations feels appropriate. Teaching using a strict lecture format doesn't work for me, even though it may be what my students are accustomed to. Negotiating both the form and content of classes with the students is always the cutting edge of my learning as a teacher.

I like your suggestion of channelling students' former resistance to schooling into the persistence needed to become self-directed learners. I'd like to know more about how to assist students in overcoming their resistance. The pre-goal setting strategy of dialogical processes with their peers seems like a very helpful first step. I'd like to know what comes next. Self-reflective processes help all of us as learners, and I believe introducing them more formally into our teaching structure is very helpful.

"It is very important that the facilitator has had similar life and schooling experiences as the learners, to develop solidarity with them."

Although I see this as an ideal scenario, it seems to presume that we cannot develop solidarity with learners if we are not from the same background. I'd like to strongly disagree with this, and offer other areas where we can form bonds with our students. First of all, the issues of struggle are not new to any (or most) of us. Of course, there is a range of levels of struggle — yet I believe it is a common thread of the human experience that we can easily draw upon to form

by
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webs of connection with our students. Furthermore, I play many similar life-roles as my students do: mother, daughter, bread-winner, partner, etc., each of them offering the food for building connections. But far more important than these is acknowledging the learning environment as a place where collaboration presides, where "professors and students actively and mutually engage in the learning process. Together, *they define and create a body of knowledge that informs and transforms our world*(N.E.A., p.8). This is where we primarily develop solidarity with the learners. We are paired in a co-creative process, as both learners and teachers. When we bring this level of equality and respect to our classrooms, acknowledging our role as life-time learners, we create an environment that supports us all in taking risks, advocating for our needs and being the "experts". In my workplace, we use the term "communities of scholars" to denote this philosophical and pedagogical belief/structure. It is my experience that when allowed to see ourselves as an integral piece within the structure of a whole unit (class), we synergize in creating a dynamic whole which is defined by our needs and personal differences, and whose goals are to work together to serve our collective and individual needs. Thus, far more important than having the same background as our students, is having the same leverage and power in our present learning situations. This truly facilitates respect and solidarity.

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When we bring this level of equality and respect to our classrooms, acknowledging our role as life-time learners, we create an environment that supports us all in taking risks, advocating for our needs and being the "experts".

Learning from Experience

From Minnow to Overachiever

by
Loren McGrail

Editor
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(The following is an account of my personal experiences with being evaluated and assessed as a learner. My road to participatory assessment is due in part to these early painful experiences. These visceral experiences have contributed substantially to my opposition and resistance to any kind of standardized testing. In addition reflecting back on these experiences has made me very empathetic to other learners who have experienced evaluation as a less than positive experience.)

There are four events in my life that have led me to learner-centered approaches to assessment. The first event occurred while I was in 2nd grade. I was a "minnow". While all my girlfriends were swimming through the blue, green, yellow, and red versions of the endless and exciting tales of Sally, Dick, and Jane, I was stuck on "See Spot Run". I was stuck in the back of the room with the rowdy boys (my friends on the baseball diamond) and the other "slow girls". The only thing that motivated me to "grow up" and become a "goldfish" and eventually a "shark" was the glimmer of hope that one day I would be able to read a chapter book, a hard cover book that maybe had a story worth knowing. This was event #1. You can tell from my tone that I've been scarred for life— an adult child of tracking and basal readers.

My second event happened the summer of 5th grade. Somehow I had learned to read by the time I got to 5th grade but math was still a problem for me. My parents had tried everything from summer school intensives to the "teaching machine". Knowing math concepts or understanding how math could be used in one's daily life hadn't happened yet.

So my parents, in a desperate attempt to do their jobs as good parents, bought me a "teaching machine", a small blue box that you put paper into then scrolled up endless math problems to solve over and over again until you got it right. It was the precursor to doing drills on the computer.

I was supposed to do a certain number of "units" a day before going out to play or swim. After about the third day sitting inside a hot stuffy room by myself trying to solve algebra problems that I more often than not got wrong, I discovered that when I put the paper into the machine I could see all the answers. The solution to my dilemma was simple; I would simply copy the correct answers (but not all the answers because then I would get caught). I figured out a certain percent I should get right and then I would increase it gradually so no one would suspect. The system worked great. I did my assigned summer work in less than half the time it normally would have taken me and indirectly learned something about percents.

I also learned something about math and learning too. I learned I could beat

I was now being punished for going beyond my assigned level of skill and experience as well. I was condemned and furthermore I could be thrown out of school for poetic inspiration. This was worse than just being labeled "slow". I was being stigmatized as an "overachiever"— a person who achieved more than they were supposed to.

the system if I really set my mind to it and that getting the right answer didn't feel like learning whether I cheated or worked on the problem. This second revelation came about when I decided I would not just copy the answer but figure out why it was the right answer and then work myself backwards into figuring out how this could be. As a result math became interesting and challenging and I think I actually learned something in the process.

My third event happened in 10th grade in my English class. We were assigned an essay to do over the weekend. I wrote about death and dying *a la* Barry McQuire's "The Eve of Destruction", George Harrison and John Donne. An odd combination of influences I agree, but this was the 1960s and I was an anti-war protester and life was like that back then. I wrote this essay and, what can I say, I was divinely inspired when I wrote it. The words just poured out of me and I trusted them. I turned my paper in with a feeling of having done a great job for once. I got it back a few days later with a big red letter F on it and a "See me" scrawled next to it. I was in a state of shock. How could I have been so wrong about my accomplishments?

The teacher (also our football coach) said my essay was "unbelievably well written and mature and hence obviously not mine; I must have plagiarized and plagiarism was cause for expulsion. I didn't know what to say. I was now being punished for going beyond my assigned level of skill and experience as well. I was condemned and furthermore I could be thrown out of school for poetic inspiration. This was worse than just being labeled "slow". I was being stigmatized as an "overachiever"— a person who achieved more than they were supposed to.

My final event happened during my senior year of high school. I had applied to a college which will remain nameless, though I will never forget that bitter autumn day in the admission officer's book-cluttered office. I had just finished a tour of the campus and was now chatting with the admissions officer about Thomas Aquinas and how I wanted to continue my education in philosophy. Yes, I had read already most of the Great Books. In the middle of our conversation he said he hadn't received my board scores yet but as soon as they came in he would let me know about the college's decision. He called his assistant who came in with them in her hand. I watched his face go from concerned to sad as he shook his head. Finally he said that though I had "wisdom," I didn't have the academic qualifications to go to this school. Wisdom but low test scores. This was my final run in with the system and its need to evaluate me not according to what I knew but how I measured against the "norm".

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Book Review

Portfolios in the Writing Classroom

by
Don Robishaw

SABES

Yancy, K. B. (Ed.) (1992). *Portfolios in the Writing Classroom.* Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers.

Alternative approaches to Assessment that enables adult literacy students to evaluate their own experiences and progress come to us in many forms today. These approaches help students view their own learning process in writing. They also help teachers identify the strategies students use and how these strategies change as they progress as learners. The use of portfolios as an assessment tool is one approach that has become quite popular in our field recently.

Many adult literacy/adult basic education (AL/ABE) practitioners are using portfolios in their writing classrooms. *Portfolios in the Writing Classroom* contains a range of essays on that very subject.

The book begins with an essay that discusses the relationship among portfolio assessment, summative assessment and formative assessment. It also discusses what might be called "reflective evaluation," a form of self evaluation considered very important to the writing process. The use of portfolio assessment in the writing class relies heavily on a self reflective process.

The article also deals with the challenges that the portfolio movement in the United States faces:

1) Weakening of effect through careless imitation (fear of the "bandwagon" effect, as happens in so many other areas of innovations).

2) The failure of research to validate this pedagogy. (Many still believe that "it" has to be measurable and countable to be valid and worth doing.)

3) The co-optation by large scale external testing programs. (There may be incongruities between large scale portfolio testing and writing portfolios used in the classroom.)

As in the introductory article, the remaining authors are not from an AL/ABE background, but mostly from fields related to formal schooling. Still, some of these discussions will be of interest to the AL/ABE professional.

The remaining articles are described as follows:

"Collectively, the chapters reflect a movement from the self initiated use of portfolios, as narrated in Sue Ellen Gold's chapter, and from the individual struggling to make sense out of a general "assignment" to introduce portfolios, as described by James Newkirk, towards the use of portfolios taken up by teachers working together in community. Catherine D'Aoust's teachers are still working individually, but support each other in a university seminar on 'Teachers as Researchers'. Sandra Murphy and Mary Ann Smith describe a middle school faculty cooperating with outside researchers to learn how to derive

It also discusses what might be called "reflective evaluation," a form of self evaluation considered very important to the writing process. The use of portfolio assessment in the writing class relies heavily on a self reflective process.

insights from a shared portfolio project — insights about students and about how portfolio projects work. Roberta Camp's portfolio project grew out of cooperation between theorists, educational testers, adminis-trators, and teachers of the performing arts, for whom portfolio took on a special function as instruments for student growth allowing assessment of the learning processes as well as the products... David Kneeshaw discusses portfolio from an even larger perspective in his description of the Ontario "Writing Folder" project, intended to allow evaluation and record keeping as a student moves across grade levels, but designed as well to encourage much of the same sense of discovery by teachers and students that characterizes the individual accounts... Irwin Weiser tells the last story, of a considered decision to introduce portfolios into the basic writing program at Purdue University, primarily as a way to defer summative grading" (pp. 13-14).

The book's editor concludes with a short essay on the importance of self reflection and portfolios in the wiring classroom. She also leaves us with many unanswered questions that can be perhaps best answered by the individual teacher and his or her individual students.

There are a growing number of articles, but only a few books on the subject of portfolios, either as an assessment tool for reading and writing or an approach to helping students improve their writing. Kathleen Blake Yancy has put together this collection of essays on the use of it as an evaluation tool *and* on the "pedagogy of portfolios."

I especially recommend this book to practitioners in our field who, because of the focus of *Adventures in Assessment*, and the recent "creative wave" of assessment tools by many Massachu-sett's AL/ABE practitioners that we may primarily think of portfolios as an innovative approach to assessment. In reality, though, it is more important to think of portfolios as an excellent self reflective writing tool and as an important pedagogical approach to the teaching of writing.

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Mission Statement from the Transformers

Massachusetts Participatory Assessment Team

The Transformers is a newly formed group of adult literacy practitioners in Massachusetts. Many of its members come from component #3 of the Department of Education's GOALS project which had as its mission the goal of looking at alternative assessment or learner-centered field-based assessment.

The goal of this team is to create and support systemic change from hierarchical models of education and social organization to egalitarian models, where learners and teachers are partners in education.

We will accomplish this by maintaining a dialogue within the field of adult education with a focus on participatory field-based assessment. We are dedicated to concentrating and coordinating our efforts towards broadening the understanding of adult educators, learners, administrators, and funders about participatory principles which are the basis for meaningful assessment and social change.

We are committed to developing new ways of looking at our programs, ourselves, and our communities in order to support mindful action and access to power. Our vision is to continue to build a network of interested people who will work together on projects that lead to this kind of change at the program, community, state, and national policy level.

PRINCIPLES OF PARTICIPATORY ASSESSMENT

1. It must be program-based and learner-centered.
2. It should help the learners achieve their goals.
3. It must build on learner strengths, not deficits.
4. It must be part of the learning experience.
5. It should not be a single procedure but a variety of procedures.
6. It should provide feedback that will lead to better instruction.

STRATEGIES

- Collaborate with other groups and individuals with whom we share common goals such as SABES, New England Literacy Resource Center, and community based organizations.
- Continue to support the development of field-based assessment practices through the Partnership Project. The Partnership Project is a mentoring project funded by DOE which allows practitioners who are interested in learning about participatory assessment to become partners with program staff who have been developing

and using participatory procedures and tools.

- Disseminate the toolkit to practitioners throughout the state and the New England Region.
- Create and coordinate a pool of trainers in participatory assessment to provide training and technical assistance within our state, New England and the country.
- Maintain our connection and commitment to the journal *Adventures in Assessment*.
- Interpret and clarify the Massachusetts Quality Indicators with a focus on how portfolio assessment fits in to the state's policy on assessment.

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SURVEY

Please fill out and return to Loren McGrail at SABES

(address on inside back cover)

This survey is to determine the effect that *Adventures in Assessment: Learner Centered Approaches to Assessment and Evaluation* has had on the field. Does the journal either change or validate people's practices and is it a good staff development tool? We define staff development as the process of reinforcing, maintaining and building effective teaching practices. Ultimately, staff development acts as an antidote to burnout.

1. Have you read *Adventures in Assessment*? ☐ Yes ☐ No

   If you have, which volume(s)? ☐ Volume 1 (Yellow) ☐ Volume 2 (Light Green) ☐ Volume 3 (Purple) ☐ Volume 4 (Dark Green)

2. Do you find the layout/design of *Adventures in Assessment* accessible or easy to understand? ☐ Yes ☐ No

   Comments:

3. What criteria do you use when deciding which articles to read?

   ☐ Titles or articles
   ☐ Author
   ☐ Interests
   ☐ Other (Specify)

   Do you read the introductions? ☐ Yes ☐ No
   Do you read Voices from the Field? ☐ Yes ☐ No
   Do you read Getting Started? ☐ Yes ☐ No
   Do you read Ongoing? ☐ Yes ☐ No
   Do you read What Counts? ☐ Yes ☐ No

   Comments:

4. Has *Adventures in Assessment* affected your thinking or beliefs? ☐ Yes ☐ No
   Comments:

5. Has *Adventures in Assessment* affected your practices (such as sparked a new tool orthrown out all of them)? ☐ Yes ☐ No
Comments:

6. Have you changed the your assessment practices in your classroom and/or program? ☐ Yes ☐ No

7. Do you have ways in which you include learners in your assessment practices? ☐ Yes ☐ No What are they?

8a. Have you ever used any ideas or tools from an article? ☐ Yes ☐ No Which one?

8b. Please comment on how you used it. Did you change it? Did you adapt it?

8c. May we publish these comments in the "Letter to the Editor" section of the journal? ☐ Yes ☐ No

9. Would you be interested in writing for the journal? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please fill in the information below or call Loren McGrail at World Education, (617) 482-9485.

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adventures in ASSESSMENT

Learner-centered

approaches

to assessment &

evaluation

in adult literacy

Volume 7

Partnership Project

December 1994

Funded by the Massachusetts Department of Education

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SABES

System for Adult Basic Education Support

SABES is the System for Adult Basic Education Support, a comprehensive training and technical assistance initiative for adult literacy educators and programs. Its goal is to strengthen and enhance literacy services and thus to enable adult learners to attain literacy skills. SABES accomplishes this goal through staff and program development workshops, consultation, mini-courses, mentoring and peer coaching, and other training activities provided by five Regional Support Centers located at community colleges throughout Massachusetts.

SABES also maintains an adult literacy Clearinghouse to collect, evaluate, and disseminate ABE materials, curricula, methodologies, and program models. Each of the five SABES Regional Support Centers similarly offers program support and a lending library. SABES maintains an Adult Literacy Hotline, a statewide referral service which responds to calls from new learners and volunteers. The Hotline number is 1-800-447-8844.

The SABES Central Resource Center, located at World Education, publishes a statewide quarterly newsletter, "Bright Ideas," and journals on topics of interest to adult literacy professionals, such as this volume of "Adventures in Assessment."

The first three volumes of "Adventures in Assessment" present a comprehensive view of the state of practice in Massachusetts through articles written by adult literacy practitioners. Volume 1, Getting Started, *included start-up and intake activities. Volume 2,* Ongoing, *shares tools for ongoing assessment as part of the learning process; Volume 3,* Looking Back, Starting Again, *focused on tools and procedures used at the end of a cycle or term, including self, class, and group evaluation by both teachers and learners. Volume 4 covered a range of interests. Volume 5,* Tale of the Tools *was dedicated to reflecting on component 3 tools of alternative assessment. Volume 6,* Responding to the Dream Conference, *was dedicated to responses to Volumes 1-5. Volume 7,* The Partnership Project, *highlighted writings from a mentoring project for practitioners interested in learning about participatory assessment. Volume 8 covered a range of topics from education reform to learner involvement in assessment. Volume 9 looked at assessment in a volunteer program, native language literacy, ESOL programs, and evaluations in workplace education programs.*

We would like to see your contribution, especially if you are doing native language literacy or low-level ESOL literacy. Contact editor, Alison Simmons, to discuss your submission.

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adventures in ASSESSMENT

Learner-centered approaches to assessment & evaluation in adult literacy

Volume 7

Editor: Alison Simmons

Assistant Editor: Rick Schwartz

December 1994

Introduction

Working Together, Sharing Ideas

by
Alison Simmons

Editor
SABES Central
Resource Center/
World Education

The seventh volume of *Adventures in Assessment* highlights writings from The **Partnership Project**, a mentoring project funded by the Massachusetts Department of Education which allowed practitioners interested in learning about participatory assessment to become partners with other practitioners who have been developing and using participatory procedures and tools. As you work your way through the first section of this volume, you'll follow the route of 12 practitioners who chose mentoring as a research vehicle to explore the landscape of alternative assessment. As a reader you can become involved by looking at the articles as a panorama of experiences that you can add to or subtract from, given your experiences and your program needs.

THE PARTNERSHIP WRITERS

The writers involved in The Partnership Project highlight the importance of having the resources and support needed to come together as peers around a common theme. As a group these articles raise a lot of questions about assessment and mentoring as another vehicle for dissemination of alternative assessment. Most of the writers here focus their inquiry and development not only in assessing learners skills in a particular content area but they also recognize the importance of looking deeper into the other factors that make learners teachable. **Rudee Atlas and Dan Wilson** respond to the fears, anxieties, and needs of students at the very beginning of their learning who have little or no education in their own countries. **Deirdre McLaughlin, Marti Tassi-Richardson, Loretta Pardi** and **Estelle Williams** raise questions about learners who come to class with barriers and issues that prevent them from participating in a traditional classroom setting as well as setting and achieving their goals. These practitioners developed tools that assess particular skill areas (i.e. GED content areas) but also in the process raise the self esteem of their learners. It is assumed that by raising the self esteem of the learners there will be an increase in motivation for learners to continue their education and see the attainment of their goals as a viable option.

With **Lesly Desire** and **Henry Joseph** we catch a glimpse of the struggle they faced when trying to sort through the assessment materials handed to them as part of The Partnership Project. In their vision of alternative assessment they wonder if there is an ending to this inquiry as Lesly states *"It (assessment) is ever changing and never finished."* We hope to get an update on their findings in a future issue of *Adventures*.

Barbara Krol-Sinclair and **Pauline O'Leary** work on developing a tool that would encourage parents to plan and assess their literacy activities with their children.

As a partnership, **Carolyn Gear,** co-coordinator of the project, and **Widi Sumaryano,** mentee, discuss the impact this project has had on Widi's learners as well as on his growth as a teacher. In another type of self reflection Caroline talks about the richness of being a mentor and the key factors that make a mentoring relationship work.

To give us an overview of the project and its goals **Paul Trunnel,** co- coordinator, talks about the process and the why of the Partnership Project. He also reflects on the process and its impact on dissemination of alternative assessment in Massachusetts.

With Don Robishaw's article we walk away from The Partnership Project but not some of the ideas and questions that the group has raised. Don takes the questions of self esteem and goal setting a bit further by saying that some students need a unlearning process before they can actively participate in these activities in a meaningful way and become self-directed learners. He states that students may not be ready for the participatory processes that require students to define their goals and evaluate themselves towards attainment of these goals. In his article he looks at an intervention program that he has developed that addresses the question of self direction and student preparation for goal setting and the participatory classroom.

In her response to Judy Hofer and Pat Larson's article *(see* Responding to the Dream Conference, *AIA, Spring 1994),* **Janet Isserlis** takes us on a questioning journey into literacy practices and community development by forcing us to look at how our roles as practitioners are defined in terms of community development. In the process of asking us to think critically about our roles, she describes the program she is working with in Vancouver and how she is defining her role.

Kenneth Tamarkin and **Susan Barnard** in "The Right Answer" look at open-ended questions as an alternative process for the ADP math assessment. They propose that testing for critical thinking skills in addition to computational skills will give us an understanding of the learners' thought processes involved in solving math problems. The article documents the process and results of their research and examples of the questions themselves.

Debbie Tuler discusses the revision of an assessment tool in a workplace education program in Newton, MA. The need for revising an existing tool was a common concern between all stakeholders (learners, managers, supervisors and teachers) that it was not giving them the information needed to make informed decisions about attending classes, informing teaching, and placing learners in the appropriate classes. Debbie also talks about the process of revising the initial assessment and the challenge of meeting the needs of all stakeholders.

In learning from experience, **Elizabeth Santiago** talks about her experience as a GED recipient and raises the question of equivalency and the stigma that goes along with the Alternative Diploma.

A poem about assessment is included in this volume from **Diane Pecarora** in Minnesota. It is a first in *Adventures in Assessment* and I hope it sets a precedent for those who would rather poetry, not prose. We will continue to encourage alternative forms of expression as long as it fits into the printed page.

Lenore Balliro reviews *Dimensions of Change: An Authentic Assessment Guidebook* by Melody Schneider and Mallory Clarke from Seattle, Washington. This guide book is the documentation of a special assessment project entitled "Integrated Assessment: Being Accountable to Teachers and Students" where the authors worked with teachers and learners around assessment in Washington State.

Adventures in Assessment has a new Editor: Alison Simmons from SABES Central Resource Center at World Education. Alison has a background in ESL and is a literacy specialist with SABES. Rick Schwartz will continue to be the Assistant Editor for the journal. For future *Adventures in Assessment*, we will maintain the scope of the journal, which is practitioner based, and see how we can include the voice of the learner in the dialogue. We will also be publishing *Adventures in Assessment* once a year each Fall to make way for a new journal through SABES on program and staff development.

We still encourage people to write for our various components of **getting started, on-going, looking back, what counts, letters from the field, learning from experience** and **publications review.** Although Volume 8 will highlight some articles from the workplace, we encourage people to respond to articles in this issue or share with us your alternative/authentic practices.

(signature here)

Alison Simmons

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The Partnership Project

by
Paul Trunnell

Harborside Community Center,
East Boston

The Mentoring Project has its roots in a statewide project on assessment standards initiated in the summer of 1992 by the Massachusetts Department of Education's (DOE) Bureau of Adult Education. This project, dubbed Greater Opportunities for Adult learner Success, or GOALS, included participants made up of practitioners from adult education, teachers, counselors, administrators, and even students. Each component focused on a different aspect of assessment and examined its viability as part of a statewide assessment system. While different components studied computer tracking, standardized examinations, and student evaluations of the programs, Component Three focused on alternative assessment.

Comprised of practitioners from all over Massachusetts, Component Three was certainly not the statewide initiative of alternative assessment. Many of the participants had already been developing and sharing different methods in their programs for years. Yet it was the first occasion that alternative assessment was finally recognized by the DOE as a potential alternative to more traditionally accepted methods (e.g. standardized testing or competency-based curricula). It was also the first time that alternative assessment practitioners had assembled on a regular basis for the purpose of discussing their work.

While the other components were developing their projects with predetermined products, Component Three participants were given a blank canvas. Our sole requirement was to investigate how alternative assessment could be used as part of a statewide assessment system. In our discussions, it became obvious that we all had different approaches and that these differences were products of our different learners classrooms, programs, and communities, as well as our different strengths at teachers. As such, there was clearly no one form or approach that was better than another.

We knew that our "product" as Component Three wouldn't be a standardized tool or activity that could be used by all programs. Instead, we wanted something that would communicate the importance of differences among learners, teachers, classes, and programs. What better way than to combine all of our different methods and materials and make those available to other practitioners? Thus, the idea of the Alternative Assessment Toolkit was born.

The Toolkit, in its final form, includes assessment materials from nearly one dozen participating programs. The tools, along with instructions on their use, are divided into the three basic categories of assessment. Initial, Ongoing, and Looking Back. Within these sections the tools are separated by program to stress that all of these tools have evolved in a particular context.

In the fall of 1993, as the Toolkit and Component Three neared completion, we discussed ways to continue our work. Certainly the Toolkit would be of value for the field, but we still had several questions: Could the value that was based on collaboration be maintained and broadened to more programs? Were there other ways our work could support and strengthen the way of alternative assessment in the field of adult education? In what ways was our work replicable in other programs?

We preferred using "partner" rather than "mentor", because we see ourselves as always in development with our practice and we knew we were likely to learn as much through the project as the new participants.

Gradually the idea of a mentoring project evolved. Such a project would allow us to continue our own development from a new perspective. It would broaden the network of adult educators using alternative assessment. Most importantly, it would allow us to observe and evaluate firsthand how our materials would be adapted by other programs.

The idea excited us, and it interested the DOE. Throughout Fall, 1993, a core group of the original Component Three now facilitated by teacher/administrator Caroline Gear of the International Language Institute of MA., Inc., continued to meet and work out the details.

The Partnership Project, as we named it, would pair together a member of Component Three with a practitioner who wanted to use and develop alternative assessment in their class and/or program. We preferred using "partner" rather than "mentor", because we see ourselves as always in development with our practice and we knew we were likely to learn as much through the project as the new participants. Partnerships would be designed around similar contexts – beginning ESL, for example and similar interests – goal setting, self-evaluation, portfolio, etc. Our specific objectives as stated in our formal invitation to participants were to "disseminate the Toolkit to a broader audience, to document the process of development and adaptation at the participating sites, and to create a broader network for alternative assessment within the state".

From the very beginning, the Partnership Project was designed to correspond with the demanding schedule of adult education practitioners. The length of the project would be brief, from January to June of 1994. The technical assistance time of the partners was kept to a minimum (20 hours) and the form of assistance – telephone calls, class observation, etc. – was left to the discretion of the partners. Emphasis was placed on the geographical proximity of the partners so that distance of travel would not be an obstacle. Central meetings were necessary, but would only be held at the beginning, middle, and end of the process - a reflection of the Initial, Ongoing, and Looking Back steps of the alternative assessment process (see Overview). Caroline Gear and I volunteered to coordinate the project.

We publicized the project during the fall of 1993 - first at Network 93 (a statewide Adult Education conference sponsored by the Massachusetts Coalition for Adult Education), and then at an alternative assessment class provided by SABES' Western Region office. Though initially we received a lot of positive attention, these efforts yielded only a few formal responses. In the end, word-of-mouth publicity was our best resource, and yielded a surprisingly diverse membership.

New participant Pauline O'Leary, a teacher at ABCD's Even Start Program in Dorchester, had partnered with Barbara Krol-Sinclair from Chelsea's Intergenerational Reading Project.

ESL teacher and administrator Lesly Desiree, of Dorchester's Log School, would work with counselor Henry Joseph of the Haitian Multi-Service Center, also of Dorchester. Dan Wilson of Boston's North End Union would focus on Beginning ESL with Rudee Atlas of the East Boston Harborside Community Center. Estelle Williams, also of the North End Union, would meet with Loretta Pardi of Harborside regarding her mixed level GED students. Widi Sumaryano, an ESL teacher at Lutheran Services in Springfield, would be partnered with Caroline Gear of the International Language Institute in Northampton. Deirdre McLaughlin of Barnstable County House of Correction (ABE/ESL) program paired with Marty Tass-Richardson of Haverhill's Community Action Inc.

Though all of these agencies had been involved in the Component Three GOALS Project, many of their participants were new to our collaborative. Henry Joseph of HMSC, Loretta Pardi at the Harborside, and Marty Tassi-Richardson of Community Action had developed and/or used the materials at the agencies, but none had participated directly in the meeting of Component Three. This was because the original lead people at their agencies, after a year and a half of direct involvement in the GOALS Project, were only to pass the baton to the others at their programs. Also noteworthy, Deirdre and Lesly had participated in Component Three, but were both new to alternative assessment and did not feel prepared to contribute materials to the Toolkit. They wanted to participate as mentees. Of the partners, five had never formally used alternative assessment in their classrooms.

Our Initial Meeting was held at the end of January at the DOE's new space in Malden. (Though our scope was statewide, all but two of our partners were from Eastern Mass.) Prior to this meeting, participants were already assigned partners and had been given the task of touching base at least once, to discuss their interests and ensure that the partnership was not wrong from the start. The purpose of the first central meeting was for the different pairs to meet each other, share their expectations, and to discuss together the goals and expectations of the project.

The purpose of the first central meeting was for the different pairs to meet each other, share their expectations, and to discuss together the goals and expectations of the project.

January's rough weather, however, prevented almost half of the participants from attending – some of these that did attend didn't arrive until late in the meeting. We used the time as best we could. After our introductions and preliminary discussion, we were joined by Bob Bickerton, Director of the newly reorganized DOE Bureau of Adult and Community Learning Services (formally the Bureau of Adult Education). He spoke of the DOE's continued interest in investigating alternative assessment's role in a statewide plan. Because of this, he said the DOE was interested in funding our project. Though this was good news, the partners stressed that they were in favor of the straightforward objectives and minimized time commitment of the Partnership Project, and so were in favor of DOE support as long as it didn't increase the work load. By the time of our second meeting, DOE had agreed to fund the project by supporting the coordination and providing stipends for all the partners.

Our second meeting at the beginning of April was a thrill. Almost everyone was there. In three tight hours we packed individual sharing, updates, payment info, and goals setting. This last activity was vital, since we had only two months before our scheduled final meeting and the end of the project.

Deirdre and Marty had only met once briefly before the second meeting (they had only been paired three weeks prior, after Marty's original partner had dropped out). Though geographically far apart (Marty was on the North Shore and Deirdre was on Cape Cod) and working in different contexts (a community based agency and a county house of correction), they had already identified a common area of interest: the ongoing assessment of their students.

Estelle and Loretta had met several times and had discussed at length the motivational difficulties which they face. They had agreed to focus on ongoing tools that would encourage learners to take responsibility for their learning and increase their self esteem.

Lesly and Henry had been pleasantly surprised to learn that their programs were only a few blocks from each other and that they serve similar populations. Lesly had already been using the HMSC's initial and ongoing assessment tools and he and Henry would choose one tool or area as a focus. Widi and Caroline had visited each other's programs and observed each other's classes. They had already been focusing on oral feedback and the use and adaptation of ILI's Learner Log.

Dan and Rudee had met and discussed their needs for assessment. Rudee's work emphasized student self-assessment and Dan had chosen this as his focus.

Pauline and Barbara had their plan from the very beginning. They wanted to create a new tool that would focus on parent-child interaction. They wanted to measure the academic growth of the parents through structured parent-child learning activities.

It was already clear that with eight weeks left in the project, the most we could expect would be the development and limited implementation of tools and activities in the partners' chosen areas.

Participants were pumped up by the end of the meeting: "a good use of time", said one; "great to hear from one another", said another. "The best part was the sharing", said a third. Practitioners were invigorated by the opportunity to discuss their goals and processes with others working on some of the same questions.

Our third meeting at the beginning of June came all too soon. All of our programs were in their final weeks. All of us seemed equally frazzled by the normally full-to-bursting spring schedule of our programs. For some, the burden was greater than usual: Caroline had to teach extra classes because of funding cuts; Lesly was in the same boat. Marty had discovered that funding had been cut for her program and it was closing by the end of the month. The stories were all too familiar, and as adult educators, we had heard them too many times.

We sat down with our sandwiches and sodas to share our work, look at our goals, and see how we'd done. The video camera in the corner of the room was a little distracting at first, but we soon were caught up in the flow of the meeting. Dan passed around his student self-evaluation forms. We all enjoyed the little people figures used for the scale. Deirdre and Marty passed out their new intake package which they had faxed to one another for final revisions, and each program had adapted theirs slightly differently. Pauline discussed the effectiveness of her new parent evaluation tool and responded to comments and suggestions. Lesly and Henry succeeded in reviewing and considering the tools already in use at the Log School and in the Toolkit. Loretta had developed a Record of Participation that would enable both learners and teachers to evaluate progress. Widi had many examples of student work and insights on the effectiveness of his tools and methods.

After our sharing, Bob Bickerton visited us briefly and congratulated us on our work. He also asked us to consider the next steps: What role, if any, might alternative assessment play in a state assessment system? What roles, if any, did we intend to play? We considered these questions as we considered our own next steps: participating in Network 94, meeting after publishing our articles in the fall, organizing a broader workshop for the fall, perhaps continuing our partnerships informally in the future.

At the end of the day, the feedback (as in a participatory classroom, we hoped to elicit partner feedback throughout the process) was mostly positive: coming together is wonderful, the variety of our work is impressive, we go away with so many ideas. The recurrent lament was lack of time, but we all knew that, with our schedules so busy, even this three hour meeting was luxurious.

How had we done on our objectives? We had broadened the network of adult educators using alternative means of assessment, and six more practitioners at five separate agencies in Massachusetts had developed materials and practices. The collaboration that was started in Component Three had been expanded to include a county house of corrections and an Even Start Family Literacy Program. New programs joined from Springfield and Barnstable, as well as the Boston area.

The collaboration that was started in Component Three had been expanded to include a county house of correction and an Even Start Family Literacy Program.

How had our material been adapted? Lesly borrowed directly from the Toolkit and, without much adaptation, was able to use the tools with his students. Estelle's GED class borrowed and adapted materials from Loretta. Dan's ESL class had taken guidance from Rudee's work to develop something new. Widi worked closely with Caroline borrowing and developing to suit the needs of his students and also got feedback on how he was practicing assessment. Pauline and Barbara drew on their common experience to create something new and necessary for Pauline's class.

What was apparent for everybody was that a lot of talking and thinking and observing had taken place. This meeting was an important piece of it, a chance to articulate the process and reflect. What also seemed true was that we had just gotten started. This was true in that, on one hand, most of the partners had just developed their tools, or had had the opportunity to try it out only a few times. Six months to start a partnership and begin a whole process of assessment was only just enough time to get going. Clearly for partners who had worked together before, such as Pauline and Barbara, or for those who had previous experience in assessment, such as Widi and Deirdre, the project was more manageable. Those who were freshest had more ground to cover in maybe too short of a time. On the other hand, as one participant said, "This is only the beginning." A six-month project was enough to draw in the partners to a place of greater knowledge and commitment to alternative assessment. Many of them will, I hope, continue their investigation of alternative assessment and how it works in their classroom.

☑

Adventures in Mentoring

by
Caroline Gear

International Language Institute of MA, Inc
Northampton, MA

With the GOALS Project winding down and the Toolkit nearing completion, many of the participants in the Authentic Assessment Component felt that their work was not finished. We all felt strongly that we didn't want people to just take the Toolkit and photocopy the tools without truly understanding the what, why, and for whom the tool was designed. What better way of disseminating our tools than by setting up a mentoring project that would pair members of the Authentic Assessment group with partners that were interested in adapting tools from the Toolkit to their programs?

I felt fortunate to be both a coordinator and a mentor of the 6-month Partnership Project that ran from January to June of 1994. It was a luxury to be completely focused on one aspect of adult education: Authentic assessment in the ESL/ABE classroom. I was partnered with Widi Sumaryano who teaches ESL at Lutheran Services in West Springfield. Very early in our partnership, we developed a sense of trust between us, and we created a truly wonderful working relationship. This article will share our adventures and the unanticipated outcomes of the project.

Because of an ice storm, Widi and I were unable to attend the initial meeting of all the participants at the DOE in Malden. We arranged to have our own initial meeting at the International Language Institute of MA., Inc. (ILI) to discuss the logistics of the project. We had already spoken on a number of occasions and knew that we would be able to work together. At our initial meeting, we also talked about how we viewed assessment, what types of assessment we had previously done, and what types of assessment we were using in our programs. We discussed the **Learner Log** *(see AiA, Fall, 1993)* that ILI uses and decided to limit our scope of work and concentrate on two areas: weekly written evaluation forms and oral feedback.

We talked about how ILI uses oral feedback, and I asked Widi to try the following steps in his class:

- Elicit from students the activities that they did in the class and write what they say on the board
- Ask which activities were the most helpful in learning English
- Ask which activities were the least helpful in learning English
- Ask which activities they would like to see more of
- Ask which activities they would like never to see again

Oral feedback needs to be treated as a process that the teacher does consistently at the end of class, or after a certain activity that is new to the students and an activity on which the teacher wants immediate feedback. From the start, teachers need to depersonalize the feedback so that students understand that they are commenting on the activity and not the teacher. Teachers need to be clear as to why they are doing oral feedback in the class, and students need to understand why the teacher is taking class time to ask them questions about the class. By doing oral feedback, students are more prepared for weekly written evaluations that ask for feedback about the class, and if the students are satisfied with their progress in the class. Oral feedback is an ongoing process. As both teachers and students become more comfortable with oral feedback, teachers get better at facilitating it, and students get better at responding to it.

Oral feedback is an ongoing process. As both teachers and students become more comfortable with oral feedback, teachers get better at facilitating it, and students get better at responding to it.

We set up a time for Widi to observe one of our classes at ILI. The timing was perfect as it was the start of the program, and he would be able to see how students were first exposed to the idea of feedback and the **Learner Log**. Widi suggested that he observe the class at the mid-term and at the end of the program so that he could fully understand the Intake, Ongoing, and Looking Back assessment at ILI Widi chose two samples of weekly evaluations from ILI to review and try in his classes.

After Widi had observed a class at ILI, I asked him if he had learned anything from observing the instructor doing oral feedback. "Yes. I was able to observe what you had coached me to do and what I have tried several times. I think the idea of having oral feedback as a ritual thing is very good and I'll continue to do that because it has a sense of giving a nice closure to the class. The day is closed with this relaxing and sharing. There is an opportunity for students to say what they like and by doing that I feel more certain of what I will do tomorrow. I can be more prepared when doing my course planning knowing which activities students like or don't like."

Widi was very enthusiastic about the class and we began talking about other aspects of the class. He mentioned that he had seen familiar activities that he hadn't been using, and that he was looking forward to trying these activities. He specifically commented on how the teacher was using a Total Physical Response (TPR) activity in the class. He used TPR in his class, but he noted that she had incorporated the activity to include the other skill areas and that he felt that he could and should be doing this in his class.

During the following months of the project, I saw a change in Widi. Through our telephone conversations I could hear him truly begin to understand the benefit of doing oral feedback with his students: "I'm getting a lot more feedback from my students when I ask them about the class. It's a completely different style of teaching than what I have been doing in my class. I never had a chance to do this before. Before I got involved with this project, I decided what to cover in the class. Now I feel that the students are choosing what they would like to do."

"I realize that doing oral feedback is a process where the teachers and students become more effective with feedback as time goes by. I feel that this is a very good notion that feedback is about the activity — about what we are doing in the class and not who we (the teachers) are. I'm interested in how I can facilitate feedback and how I will get the students to think about the activity and the value of the activity."

One of the major factors of our success as a mentoring team was due to the fact that we were the only participants from western Massachusetts. All the whole group meetings had been scheduled in Boston to accommodate the participants from the Eastern part of the state. Widi and I had more of an opportunity to get to know each other during the project as our travel time to and from our meetings was the forum to talk about assessment, and also to delve into other areas of our programs. Our "car talk" ranged from ESL techniques in the classroom to teacher training; from staff development to how to deal with a difficult program manager.

As the project went on, Widi became more confident with feedback and evaluation in his classes. As he saw the benefits from doing feedback, he had also been sharing this process with another ESL teacher in the program. Widi had asked the teacher to do oral feedback with his class, but what ensued caused him to stop dead in his tracks.

The teacher had tried oral feedback with his class and the feedback session became a negative experience for him; a student angrily accused the teacher that her needs were not being met by the way the class was taught. The teacher was angry with the feedback and annoyed at Widi for getting him to do feedback in his class.

Widi recounted to me that he had met with the teacher after the class and told him that most likely the student had had these feelings pent up and finally had the opportunity to vent. Widi suggested that the instructor do more oral feedback so that students wouldn't bottle things up. As Widi related this incident to me, I found this situation very interesting: while I was coaching Widi, he was coaching his co-teacher. The episode with Widi and his co-teacher demonstrates the importance of establishing ground rules, a trusting environment, and a belief that the feedback is to benefit all parties involved when entering the realm of peer coaching.

Teachers need to understand not only *why* they are doing feedback, but they also need to be coached on *how* to facilitate the discussion. It's always difficult for the ego when someone has a negative comment about the class. It is hard not to think that the comment is directed at you, the teacher. Teachers need to be coached in facilitating feedback, and teachers and students alike need to understand that when they talk about the class they are talking about the activities, and not the personality of the teacher. We need to depersonalize the feedback by focusing on the activities rather than the teacher.

Teachers need to understand not only why they are doing feedback, but they also need to be coached on how to facilitate the discussion.

After the episode, Widi discussed why he had felt that his session with the teacher did not go well; that it was almost an authority-subordinate conflict. He said that he wished that he had posed more questions to the teacher about the class rather than talking so much about the class and what the teacher could have done in the class. He also mentioned that if he had done more peer evaluation with the instructor, maybe the instructor would have felt better about Widi's suggestions.

At the beginning of the Partnership Project, Widi had mentioned that he hadn't felt comfortable giving feedback to co-teachers. He felt that they also had experience, and he felt insecure in giving them feedback. Widi was carrying over his ideas of evaluation to other areas. He was not only doing evaluation with his class, but he was evaluating himself. He wasn't feeling insecure about doing feedback with the instructor, but had moved on to focusing on how he could improve his ability to give feedback and evaluation to his teachers.

Widi and I talked about working with other teachers and we came up with some strategies:

- Do more peer evaluations with the instructor
- Make sure the instructor observes Widi doing feedback and discuss what the instructor saw
- Pose questions to the instructor and try to get the instructor to reflect/comment on the class before Widi comments on it.

It was extremely beneficial to our partnership to see the physical environment, meet the people and students, and discuss with staff and students what the Partnership Project was about.

Widi and I both felt that we had been spending a lot of time on teacher training and that maybe we were getting side-tracked. We decided to focus more on the weekly written evaluations in subsequent meetings, but still touch base with what was going on with Widi and his co-teacher.

One of the important steps in establishing a good mentoring relationship is for the mentors to visit each other's program as many times as possible. It was extremely beneficial to our partnership to see the physical environment, meet the people and students, and discuss with staff and students what the Partnership Project was about. Having staff and students of the programs understand our project validated our belief that this was an important project.

Along with oral feedback, Widi had adapted our written weekly evaluation forms *(Learner Logs)* to his program, and found that as the students got used to the forms, they began to write more about the class and what they wanted to see more of in the class.

In May I observed Widi with the intention of giving him feedback about how he was doing oral feedback. I observed the whole class, and began taking notes on what he did in his class. Over coffee we talked about the class. I asked him if he wanted some feedback on the whole class, rather than just on how he was doing oral feedback. We reviewed the specific activities of the class, and I asked Widi if there was anything in the class that he didn't feel comfortable with. We also talked about why he had chosen an activity, and then ended our discussion with suggestions for future classes.

There is not a lot of staff development or support for ESL instructors in his program, and he was eager to hear what another ESL instructor had to say about his class. When he had been observed before in his program, it was by an administrator with no experience in teaching ESL.

This was the first time that I had given feedback to a teacher that was not in our school. It seemed easier as we had been working closely over a period of time and had developed a feeling of trust. I felt that it was important to our relationship for Widi to observe me in the class and give me feedback about the activities he had observed. This kept our relationship on an even keel and demonstrated how we were learning from each other.

The partnership was successful because everything we focused on was modeled for Widi. Oral feedback with students, oral feedback with peers, and classroom activities all were set up for Widi to observe and comment on. Widi understood that what we were focusing on in this partnership wasn't "the only way" of giving feedback to his students and to his teachers, but he saw what we were doing as something useful and made the choice to extend what he was learning about assessment into other areas. This enabled Widi to grow professionally both inside and outside of the classroom.

The Partnership Project ended in June, but Widi and I continued to meet with each other. Not only did we continue our discussions about feedback and evaluation, but we also met to discuss our reflective pieces for *Adventures In Assessment*. This added piece made us both realize that authentic assessment in the classroom and writing for the journal are on parallel: They both are a process, require constant revision, and share a feeling of never being the perfect piece or the perfect tool to measure progress.

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Authentic Assessment from Another Angle

by
Widi Sumaryano

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After graduating from Sanata Dharma Teacher Training College, I taught ESL in Indochinese refugee camps in Indonesia and Thailand. In the Indochinese refugee training programs, teachers from many cultural backgrounds teach classes of refugee students to promote the refugee's initial resettlement and self-sufficiency in the United States. Teachers work with refugee students in the areas of English language, cultural orientation, work orientation and preparation for American secondary schools. There are intensive pre-service and on-going in-service teacher trainings to promote teacher independence, developing a teacher's ability to make informed choices about teaching.

Six years later, upon coming to the U.S., I got a part-time teaching job with Lutheran Social Services. I was the only teacher and was assigned to revive the dormant ESL program for refugees from the former U.S.S.R. The director told me, "This is your class list and the address of the church where the classroom is." I called my friends to ask if they knew anything about Russian culture. With a few hints from them I met my students the next day. It was quite challenging to have to work alone with minimal guidelines, no available pre-service nor in-service trainings at all.

I was able to manage the program, however, then we got a grant that incorporated employment services and ESL. The funder mandated that we put more emphasis on employment-oriented ESL. When we hired more teachers, I was assigned to be the ESL coordinator. At first, I did not feel comfortable doing it because I thought that every teacher must already "know" how to teach. I did not want to tell other teachers what to do. I did not even want to check what they were doing. I assumed all teachers could function without supports such as orientation, pre-service/in-service trainings as I had done in the U.S.

However there was a high turnover in my program. I felt really sorry for a few teachers who got burned-out and left my program. I felt terribly guilty for not being able to help them in dealing with their challenges. Since then I have been encouraging my colleagues to attend conferences and workshops through SABES, MATSOL and other professional affiliations. After attending workshops and conferences, we feel energized to apply some new teaching activities that we have learned. I became more enthusiastic and a little bit more creative in my planning and teaching, but it did not stay long. A few months later things got "mundane". I became the "dead wood" teacher, the one that always did things that I was familiar with, easy preparation or no preparation at all, since I already had the materials and handouts I created last class. So I basically did things based on what I had, what I liked, and what I knew worked. Everything started from "I". Nobody really supervised me, told me whether I did things effectively or not. The feedback that I got was only from my students. They did not say anything directly, but I occasionally could see from their facial expressions when they were not satisfied with the lesson for the day.

Unfortunately, that simple feedback did not give me enough clues of what they wanted or what to do next. Some students channeled their feedback indirectly through other staff members. Unfortunately often times other staff members used the feedback as an instrument to criticize the ESL teachers.

Then I attended a mini-course on Authentic Assessment facilitated by Lindy Whiton from SABES. This course gave me a broader view about evaluation, assessment, feedback, and program development. The group was small and participants were enthusiastic enough to share what they were doing and had developed. Guest speakers/facilitators came from various programs. Among the workshops I attended was one about "Learner's Logs," facilitated by Caroline Gear from International Language Institute of Massachusetts, Inc.. We explored all different kinds of assessment tools from intake and on-going to mid/post assessment. At the end of the mini-course, I was asked if I would be interested in a mentoring project. I was interested even though I did not have a clue what it was going to be.

I got involved mainly because I realized that I needed to broaden my understanding of assessment to develop my program. My knowledge and experience in assessment was limited to standardized assessment, such as the Basic English Skill Test (BEST), Michigan Test, etc. I liked the idea of using Authentic Assessment tools and I wanted to know more about them. I decided to sign up for the Authentic Assessment Partnership Project/AAPP and chose Caroline Gear as my mentor.

I think the expectation was that, through this project, more authentic assessment tools would be created/refined and disseminated to enhance program development, as an alternative to the existing commonly used standardized assessment. The goal of this project was building professional networks, and researching authentic assessment tools. My goal was to get expert coaching in adopting/adapting authentic assessment tools that were suitable for my program. My strong focus was to see to what extent, and in what ways, students themselves buy into the assessment process and make it their own.

At first Caroline and I talked about the project itself, then discussed trying the Learner Log in my class. The next day, I tried an assessment tool where students made a list of the activities that we had done and assigned a value to them. It was difficult for my students to name the activities. I shared this problem with my mentor, and she encouraged me to try oral feedback a few minutes before class ended, where learners are invited to voice their opinions about the class. To get a better understanding of how to facilitate this assessment, I observed classes at ILI. I invited my mentor to visit my class and we had a follow-up discussion. At the discussion, we realized that there was a need to assist the students in articulating their opinions so they would not just try to please the

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teacher by saying that all activities were good and everything was fine. My mentor assured me that by doing this assessment consistently it would eventually help the students to be more clear. I came back to ILI a month later to visit the class I observed before. I wanted to see the students' progress in their ability to participate in oral feedback assessment. After the observation, my mentor and I discussed the class I had just observed, and she gave me a nicely typed feedback as a follow-up from the observation she did the week before.

Over the course of the project we met with other Partnership teams several times, updated our activities and discussed the next steps. In a meeting at the DOE office in Malden, we shared the tools that were adapted or newly created by participants. In one of these meetings, Bob Binkerton, the state Director of Adult Basic Education, joined us to converse about authentic assessment in contrast with standardized assessment in regard to accountability. Since then I have been thinking about it. I have questioned myself:

- What is accountability?
- Who should be accountable?
- To whom should I be accountable?
- Why should I or the students be accountable?
- When should we be accountable?
- How do I measure how well students have acquired English and are able to function?

I am still searching for the answers, and somehow I feel that I will find them through my experimentation with authentic assessment.

I have tried to facilitate oral feedback consistently a few minutes before class ends. I have tried the various forms of weekly assessment as well as mid-cycle and end-of-cycle assessment. I found it interesting that some students highly valued some activities that I thought nobody would like, because I did not value them myself. One week I neglected listening activities and ultimately concluded that particular skill was no longer needed since I assumed that my students had always understood me with ease. I was wrong, as some students pointed out at the oral feedback; they needed listening practice.

Oral feedback gives a sense of closure to the session or day. Before I tried oral feedback, whenever I finished my class, I felt like there was a big question "What's next?" I had to think hard for the answer. Now, after the class I feel energized. I know what my students' needs are for the next day and can plan activities that help them learn. Oral feedback also gives the students the chance to ask for more explanation about things that were not quite clear to them. This ritual of doing the oral feedback improves the ability of students to do the written weekly learning log.

I was surprised to see how much more articulate some of the students became, compared with the previous month. They were able to individually value each activity according to their learning styles, and to mention the things that they would like to learn more about.

From this Authentic Assessment Partnership Project, I learned a lot not only about assessment tools. The unexpected outcome in the process of trying these new assessment tools was that I learned valuable peer coaching training and giving feedback; how to observe, compliment and provide suggestions. We expanded our discussion into a larger scope. For example we discussed Jazz Chants and the various ways to use them as classroom activities. I learned about empowering students by encouraging them to participate more actively in oral feedback. From observing other classes, I recalled about classroom management, such as being relaxed, full of laughter, delegating simple tasks to students, cooperative learning and also about other teaching techniques, different teaching materials, such as posters, index cards, books, etc. Most of the things I saw, I might have been familiar with before, but somehow, the fact that I saw them again refreshed me. Even the time we spent in the car on the round trip to Malden, MA provided me with lots of learning; we had three hours to discuss workplace policy, program development, even personal matters.

I felt so lucky that Caroline went beyond assessment in this partnership. We expanded our discussion into a larger arena. Looking back at the goals I set initially, I think I have accomplished most of them. Thanks to Caroline Gear, Paul Trunnel and Bob Binkerton for a job well done.

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I learned about empowering students by encouraging them to participate more actively in oral feedback.

Assessing All Things that Make A Student Teachable

by
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Harborside Community Center
East Boston, MA
&
North End Union
Boston, MA

During the Partnership Project, Loretta Pardi of Harborside Community Center and Estelle Williams of the North End Union worked together to look at assessment that went beyond the content areas of the GED exam and look at how assessment fit into motivating students to take responsibility for their own learning.

We were originally interested in the Partnership Project because we expected it would help us as teachers. Teachers do not often get a chance to observe or work with other teachers, so we saw the Partnership Project as a good opportunity to work, talk and share around a common concern, in this case, assessment. Estelle was a first year GED teacher and Loretta has been teaching GED for three years and had been involved in alternative assessment for the same period.

During this project we hoped to share our experiences and concerns around teaching and assessment in a GED context. We also hoped we would have the opportunity to try new techniques or create whatever was needed to assess our students' development and achievement. As a goal, we hoped to feel more confident handling the questions of assessment and student progress.

At our first meeting, we decided to address an issue that seemed most pressing for Estelle, namely finding an easy and accurate way to measure progress in math. At that meeting Loretta shared the assessment tools she had been using to assess student progress in math and the GED content areas. These tools were adapted from previous *Adventures in Assessment* volumes, as well as teacher-made tools from her program. Loretta and Estelle looked them over and chose one to try to adapt. During the discussion that day we also realized that, although we were from different sites and had different populations, we had many of the same classroom issues and experiences. Our students had a lot in common. The ways our students survived outside the classroom (e.g. lying, cheating, drugs, etc.) prevented them from participating in the group atmosphere of the classroom. They also had issues relating to peers and/or their teachers. Students were constantly challenging us as teachers and testing our ability to set limits and maintain control within the classroom.

When Spring was at its finest, our attendance was at its lowest. It was obvious through our conversations that our classroom situations were not improving. We realized the students lacked commitment to their achievement, class, peers and teachers. They also lacked belief in their ability to achieve goals and did not feel responsibility for their own progress or learning.

After careful thought we concluded that, perhaps we were concentrating too much of our effort on tracking the progress of students academically within the content areas of the GED. Students were not yet committed to their academic success and did not view social participation in the group setting of a class to be a realistic expectation. We regrouped and committed ourselves to a goal of assessing *all* things that make a student teachable.

We proceeded by asking ourselves the following questions. (We did not expect to answer all these questions at once.)

- How do we assess our effectiveness as teachers of GED with an individual?
- Do we need to assess our students' ability to learn and achieve within normal boundaries?
- Should our students be held responsible for understanding and abiding by the same code of ethics as other school age students, e.g. K-12?
- Should we teach these (code of ethics) in Adult Education?
- Does the class schedule meet the needs of the students?
- Are we meeting the students' needs by having a learning environment that is encouraging supportive and fair to all?

We wanted to develop a system that would encourage students' commitment, beliefs and fairness to the group, as well as a tool to increase their self-esteem and encourage them to take responsibility for their learning. To do this in a timely fashion, we reviewed all the assessment tools we had from our own collections and the "Toolkit" revised a few, and put them together. We started with a daily journal that asked students to respond to several questions that would give students the opportunity to address an experience in the classroom.

This did not work. Students would talk about these topics in classes but were not willing to put anything in writing. It was also time consuming.

We had many discussions concerning how else we could encourage students to monitor their own progress in abilities not directly related to the content areas of the GED test itself. Many issues are vital not only to successful GED study but also to other areas in our students' lives, such as the search for employment. Some issues we identified with our students through conferences and informally during class time were time organization, goals setting, and sustained commitment and actions towards short and long term goals.

We wanted to develop a tool to enable students to chart their own progress in these areas. After much thought we then came up with our Record of Participation (ROP) *(see Figure 1)*. It would help students recognize what they have accomplished and what they need to do in order to attain goals.

Our Record of Participation asked the instructor to evaluate student progress and for the student to evaluate his/her own progress. Because the record is designed to be completed on a regular basis, the student will reflect on his/her activities in a timely fashion; s/he can recognize the quality of his/her participation for the past week, and then hopefully build on that success or address specific issues in the coming weeks. Plans for the future would be documented here and show long and short term goals.

This system (ROP) includes a

We wanted to develop a system that would encourage students' commitment, beliefs and fairness to the group, as well as a tool to increase their self-esteem and encourage them to take responsibility for their learning.

student's self evaluation/teacher evaluation and a discussion period for the student and teacher to talk about their assessments and possible next steps.

In the first weeks of using the record with my *(Loretta)* class, I found that most of the students tended to give themselves lower ratings than I gave them. This not entirely unexpected result gave rise to a useful class discussion about low self esteem. As the weeks progressed, however, and the class became accustomed to the weekly routine of reflection and assessment, I found that we usually concurred. Whenever noticeable discrepancies occurred between a student assessment and our own, we took the opportunity to talk with that student .

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> *A student believed she deserved a '3' in her math area. She believed that she accomplished obtaining and using information. I had rated her a '1.' because she had not advanced according to her goal plan. Her success was a repeat of the preceding months and she had not advanced since then. A discussion of her achievement and an explanation followed. The student revealed she did not want to leave the comfort zone she was in and move into algebra. She was encouraged to address her fears, as it was on her goal plan. She was also assured of support and help with her move. A discussion about her learning style followed and a plan was put into place for her to approach the new work.*
>
> *Another student assessed her attendance one month as a '3' , when. in fact, she had missed half of the class time through absences and tardiness. She was dismayed to see that I had assessed her attendance at '1' . We sat down and discussed the issue, both presenting our points of view. In subsequent weeks her punctuality improved but she still missed many classes. She maintained her self assessment at 3 while my assessment of her on this particular issue rose to 2.*

The Record of Participation proved to be very useful as an ongoing assessment tool. It was very helpful in keeping students focussed on their goals and assuring accountability and progress, when used in conjunction with a learning contract completed at the beginning of cycle. We had a very short time to test out our tool; students would benefit from using the tool for a year. It will be exciting to spend the year using the tools and comparing previous attempts at assessment and refine our tool so that it better meets the needs of the students.

CONCLUSION

The process of mentoring gave us an opportunity to plan and experiment with tools and ideas that we would have not normally had the time or support to do. It also enabled us to come up with the most complete, accurate and efficient way to access the whole student as a person who is developing in a new environment and to look more closely at those factors that would affect his or her full participation in the class or towards attainment of a goal. The process also gave us an opportunity to work together as professionals, sharing ideas and issues and using our experiences and expertise to solve critical issues that face our students in the classroom.

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FIGURE 1

Record of Participation

Name:		WK 1	WK 2	WK 3	WK 4	WK 5	WK 6
1=least 2=middle 3= most		S T	S T	S T	S T	S T	ST
Days/Hours present							
Show of commitment							
Willingness to try new activities							
Accomplish Math Skills	1.						
	2.						
	3.						
Independent work							
Group work							
Complete homework assignments							
Accomplish Writing Skills	1.						
	2.						
	3.						
Work completed on time							
Class participation							
Extra work completed							
Accomplish Social Studies Skills	1.						
	2.						
	3.						
Accomplish Job Skills							
Progress towards long term goals							

COMMENTS:

Working with Parents

Authentic Assessment in Family Literacy Programs

by
Pauline O'Leary
Barbara Krol-Sinclair

Even Start Family
Literacy Program
Dorchester, MA
&
Intergenerational
Literacy Project
Chelsea, MA

During the Partnership Project, Barbara Krol-Sinclair and Pauline O'Leary worked together to develop a tool that would help parents set goals with their children and measure the achievement of those goals. It was a way to encourage parents to take an active role in planning and evaluating their literacy practices with their children.

Both of us work in family literacy programs operating in the Boston area. Pauline's program is an Even Start project in its third year and is located at the ABCD building on Geneva Avenue in Dorchester. The program is targeted at Head Start parents and their children. Together, Even Start parents and staff work to create an environment which nurtures self-confidence. In the program, parents focus on their own reading, writing, math and English skills. They gain an awareness and understanding of their children's learning and how to continue the family's education at home. Two classes are offered, one for parents whose first language is English, the other for families for whom English is a second language. A total of 40 families are served by the program.

Barbara's program, the Intergenerational Literacy Project in Chelsea — in its sixth year of operation — is a collaborative effort of the Chelsea Public Schools and Boston University School of Education. The program is designed to help parents and other adult family members strengthen their own literacy and enhance the strategies they use in literacy interactions with their children. Flexible grouping and cooperative learning are emphasized in instruction, and materials include a range of articles of adult interest, brochures on family literacy and children's storybooks. Four multi-level, multi-lingual classes are offered, serving 100 families, for most of whom English is a second language.

In beginning work as a mentoring team, we had an advantage over pairs who were unfamiliar with each other's work. First of all, we already knew each other: we had met several times over the past few years at sharing meetings for family literacy programs at the Adult Literacy Resource Institute and have some familiarity with each other's programs and the issues we each face, both practical (such as space limitations) and philosophical (including the ongoing question of how best to meet the diverse needs and interests of learners).

Our second bond was that Pauline had visited Barbara's program two years before and had an understanding of how that program operates.

Most importantly, both programs focus on promoting family literacy. While there are some very different approaches to intergenerational literacy across many programs, the two of us are fortunate to share a common view of the families with whom we work, the role of our programs and of effective approaches for facilitating literacy practices within families. We both believe that family literacy programs can best meet the needs of participating families by building on the literacy interactions already in place in the home.

The result is that we were both delighted to have the opportunity to work together on this project.

THE INITIAL MEETING

Before the entire group of partners met in January, we decided to have Barbara visit Pauline's program. After class ended, we sat down to discuss our programs, including their objectives, schedules, the activities emphasized — and assessment.

For both of our family literacy programs, one of the primary functions of assessment tools is to increase parents' metacognitive awareness of the literacy activities they're engaging in with their children on a regular basis, that is, to help parents learn to value what they're already doing with their children, and to expand the range of strategies and activities they use in interacting with their children.

We determined that whatever assessment tool we came up with, it must serve to inform parents about their strengths and needs in developing literacy activities in which to engage with their children, in addition to demonstrating change to the teacher and the program.

GOAL-SETTING

Pauline's program is two-pronged, directed toward both helping parents focus on their own literacy development and working with parents to aid them in planning and carrying out literacy activities with their children. During the time parents are on-site, they take part in a literacy class, work with their teacher in planning for the Parent and Child Together time (P.A.C.T.), and the P.A.C.T. session itself, a block of time in which parents engage in activities with their children that encourage a sense of discovery and play and improve parent-child communication.

We decided to limit the scope of the project at this point to developing a tool that could be used by parents in planning for and assessing their activities with their children during the P.A.C.T. Pauline was interested in helping parents target their goals for a session and to determine how they would accomplish these objectives. She especially wanted parents to develop skills necessary to evaluate the success of the sessions afterwards. Barbara's experience in family literacy has been limited to her own program, so she was excited about the prospect of adapting ideas she had had success with to another program format.

INITIAL PLANNING

Our next meeting, also held at Pauline's program, was devoted to brainstorming. Pauline discussed the P.A.C.T. sessions, how they were conducted and the assessment that was currently in place *(see Figure 1)*. One of her concerns was that, although parents were actively planning for their sessions with their children, after the P.A.C.T. they were not using what they had learned from the session in planning for future P.A.C.T.s. Parents didn't seem connected enough to the activities or confident enough in their own abilities to be able to explain what had been effective and what they needed to work on next.

We tossed around ideas for developing a form that would allow parents to make the connections between the activities that they were engaging in in the program (in the P.A.C.T. session) and at home, to begin to recognize a continuum in their children's learning, connectedness between individual literacy activities and P.A.C.T. sessions.

REFINING

In our next meeting, we determined the exact design of the form *(see Figure 3)* building on one already in use *(Figure 2)*. Our previous session had consisted of the two of us tossing out ideas and building on them. This time, we sat down and wrote out how we wanted the form to look and focused on the exact wording we felt would best help parents in assessing what they were doing with their children.

We assigned outselves the task of focusing specifically on the form previously in use, what we wanted to know, and how it could be changed to give more useful information to the parents, the teacher and the program. Both of us seemed to feel that our intuitive brilliance of the last meeting had somehow slipped away, but we came up with a workable tool.

TESTING OUT

Because of problems in getting together, Pauline was only able to pilot the resulting assessment tool for three weeks, not ideal but enough to give us an idea of its strengths and weaknesses. We were unable, given the time constraints, to meet with participating parents to determine their views on the two forms and how they might help parents in their literacy interactions with their children.

Pauline found that the new assessment tool was disappointingly similar to the form she had previously been using, in that parents were completing it in the same way. With both forms, parents were putting most of their effort into their planning for the day's session (before P.AC.T.). In describing *"What I did"* and *"How I did it"*, on both the old and new tools parents were writing answers of only one or a few words.

The new format had not provided parents with a clearer way in which to describe their interactions with their child or to analyze the strategies they had used in the activity. Pauline felt that possibly parents still had difficulty in reporting what they had done after the session because they had already described their activities in writing before the P.AC.T. session; they saw no need to duplicate their efforts.

There were some significant areas of difference between the old and new tools, however. Our new form had added the phrase, *"this week I wanted to help my child..."* Pauline felt that this prompt helped parents to focus and report their objectives more clearly. In addition, the new tool provided a more structured framework and a better layout, and employed language that the parents were more likely to use. Most importantly, in using the new assessment tool parents were focused for the first time on setting goals for themselves and their children in their next P.A.C.T. session.

On the original form used by parents after P.A.C.T., all wording was in second person, i.e. "you". In the tool we created, we changed the wording to first person, "I". We hoped that this change would empower the parents who were analyzing their P.AC.T. sessions, to give them the sense that **they** were in control of their interactions with their children.

In setting agendas for the future, we hope that we can use this new tool to assist parents in carrying their self assessment of their activities with their children into their daily routines at home, and we believe that the new tool is better suited to such an extension because the parent is, in essence, analyzing her activities for her own reflection and use in setting future agendas; even though program staff also has access to the form, the parent is writing for her own authentic use and not merely as a report to the outside authority.

We also feel that our new tool helps parents to better link their individual sessions — that we have succeeded in building awareness of a learning continuum since now, at the end of one session, parents are focused on what they might want to do the next time.

CONCLUSIONS

One tool—one piece of paper—may not seem like a substantial outcome from half a year's worth of meetings and phone calls. We're tempted to become defensive, but it's clear to us that the nature of collaboration requires a great deal of groundwork. We could easily have made minor adaptations to tools already in use in Barbara's program. Our goal, however, was to begin to build a new model for parents to use in assessing their literacy interactions with their children. In that, we feel that we've succeeded. In addition, we have engaged in a great deal of reflection on the processes we engage in with our participating families on a regular basis and the role of parents in setting their own literacy agendas. Such insights help us to continually assess our own behaviors and to revise our interactions with families.

NEXT STEPS

Even though the project has officially ended, we intend to continue working together in the fall. We would like to make further refinements to the tool we've tested, as well as look for additional ways to help parents assess and reflect on their literacy interactions with their children and their own literacy development. Through interviews with participating parents, we would like to get their input into ways to help them assess the strategies they use in their interactions with their children. In addition, we'd like to develop is a method to help parents systematically monitor their literacy activities at home. For both of us, the goals are to validate the literacy activities in which families engage in the home, to help parents systematize the process of assessing their literacy interactions with their children and to inevitably make our formalized programs of reflection family literacy redundant for participating families. We have only begun the process.

☑

FIGURE 1

Parent and Child Time (PACT)

BEFORE:

- Decide WHAT you want to teach
- Plan how you will teach it
- Find materials that will help you

DURING

- Introduce the materials to your child
- Listen to your child
- Respond to your child's questions
- Use words that affirm your child's efforts
- Review or summarize the activity before you put it away

AFTER

- Review how you feel
- Record how your child did with the activity
- Write a journal entry about the lesson
- Decide how you will follow up at home

FIGURE 2
PACT

EVEN START PACT Preparation

Date: ______________________ Name: ____________

1. What I want to teach: ______________________

____

____

____

2. Materials I need: ______________________

____

____

____

3. How I will teach it: ______________________

____

____

____

FIGURE 3

PACT

BEFORE PACT:

This week I wanted to help my child:

Strategies:

I want to remember to:

AFTER PACT

What I did:

How I did it:

Next time, we will work on:

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Taking Time to Talk: Students and Teachers Setting Goals

by
Marty Tassi-Richardson
and
Deirdre McLaughlin

Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical School
&
Barnstable County House of Correction

Haverhill Community Action's "Entry Employment Experience Program" served (until its funding was cut at the end of June, 1994) 30 at-risk, drop-out youths aged 16 to 21 each year. The program was designed to give the participants necessary life and work skills, help them toward a G.E.D., and assist them in finding full-time employment, skills training or higher education as they completed the program. Marty Tassi-Richardson, a teacher in this program was the mentor in the Alternative Assessment Partnership Project. Marty has since been hired to teach in a similar program at the Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical School in Upton, Massachusetts.

The Barnstable County House of Correction Adult Basic Education program offers classes in ABE, Pre-ASE, and ASE. The institution, which was built to house 75 inmates, now houses approximately 200. About ten percent of the inmates are female. At any given time, about half of the inmates are school drop-outs who do not have a G.E.D. Inmates who have a high school diploma or G.E.D. are able to attend classes to brush-up on skills. Classes are open-ended. Student population is very transient. Students are always leaving due to completion of sentence, parole, or transfer to another institution. New students are always arriving. Classes also have to compete with the opportunity to work at a job either inside the institution (kitchen, laundry, canteen) or outside (county farm, community service). Inmates may reduce their sentences by up to six days a month for attending classes (2 days), working (2 days), and participating in Lifeline or Inside-Out programs (2 days). Deirdre McLaughlin, a teacher at the Barnstable County House of Correction, is the mentee in the partnership project.

Martha Germanowski , a teacher for Haverhill Community Action, had developed the Educational Goals Assessment Package (EGAP) for use in her Step-By-Step program (an education program for the homeless in Amesbury)*(see AiA, Fall 1991).* Marty had adapted the EGAP for use in her youth program and had been using it for over a year when she became involved in the alternative assessment project. She felt that the package could be used more effectively and the project provided a structured way to explore this possibility.

Marty was concerned with a lack of engaged, thoughtful responses from many participants on both the initial intake assessment and the weekly log. She felt that if she more clearly defined the function of the assessment in the program for herself and students, they would respond in a more meaningful way. She wanted to make the use of the assessment tool meaningful and not just another "part of the program" to be gotten through as quickly as possible.

In the past, Deirdre's intake involved the student's filling out a form which asked basic questions necessary for completing DOE statistical reports: name, age, date of birth, place of birth, first language, last grade completed, possession of high school diploma or equivalency certificate, and ethnicity. The students were also asked their reason for wanting to attend education classes. At the same intake session, the students were asked to write a few paragraphs describing their last experience in school. They were asked to be specific about whether the experience was a happy one or an unhappy one and why. They were also asked what they hoped to accomplish in the classes.

After intake information is completed, Deirdre administers the TABE (Test of Adult Basic Education) to determine initial grade levels in reading, math and language. The new student is assigned to classes based upon the TABE results, with preference given to those who do not have the diploma or G.E.D.

In her program, Marty used the MAT (Metropolitan Achievement Test) to measure reading and math levels. In her program, Marty used the MAT (Metropolitan Achievement Test) to measure reading and math levels. Through discussions with students and observations, both engaged in informal double-checks on the accuracy of these standardized assessments and the information they provided. Deirdre asks the student directly about how accurate they think the results of the test are. Marty used the adapted EGAP to do the same thing.

Deirdre's main focus on entering the partnership project was to integrate student goals more formally into the program. Student goals had always been discussed, but had never been written down, except in a very small portion of the general intake form. Ongoing goals review and resetting had to be formalized.

GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER

We met for the first time over lunch before the project's April 8 meeting at DOE headquarters, though we had spoken on the phone the week before. At the April meeting we decided that we should formalize our ongoing assessment, making it a regular part of classes. We also wanted to rely more on student goal-setting and regular review of the weekly or monthly plans used to achieve those long-term goals. We decided that in order to improve the ongoing assessment, we had to improve the initial assessment process as well. We had to formalize our initial dialogue with students on their learning experience and standardized test scores. From there, we could create an ongoing dialogue which uses that initial assessment as a reference point to allow students and teachers to meaningfully assess their progress. We set dates to visit each other's classrooms and agreed to read through the Tool Kit in the meantime, pulling out any relevant tools which we would consider in reworking our intake.

After visiting each other's classrooms, we discovered that the environments and the populations we served had many similarities. The participants in both programs shared common educational backgrounds and faced some of the same obstacles. Most of the participants had experienced some degree of academic, social and emotional difficulty in their previous school experiences. In some cases these were complicated by drug and/or alcohol abuse or physical abuse at home or in school. Poor attendance was a problem in both programs for all of the above reasons.

What differed were the practical day-to-day procedures. Deirdre works with students of all ages. She may see a given student only once a week for 2 hours, or up to three times a week, depending on the student's need to work on reading, math, and/or language. Marty's program met five days a week for three hours a day and was limited to 16 to 21-year-olds . Deirdre may have up to 80 students at any given time, some working on only one subject area, and others on several areas. Because their class hours are more limited, some of the things Marty decided would be appropriate for her program were not feasible for Deirdre. Deirdre's program often had to compete with constantly changing jail schedules for work details, court appearances, medical appointments, visits, etc.

When Marty visited Deirdre's program in April, she was dissatisfied with how the weekly objectives sheets she had been using with her students had been working. Students were not consistent in filling them out and didn't feel that they were necessary. Students had been setting objectives on Monday, and reviewing them on Friday. Marty's discussion with Deirdre led to the conclusion that weekly plans needed to be an integral part of each class day. The previous year, Marty had students set and track objectives each class day. This had seemed to be too much for students and had led to the abbreviated process she was using this year.

Our ongoing discussions led to the development of a new process. Marty will ask students to set objectives at the beginning of the week, but will ask them to comment on their work toward those objectives each day. These weekly plans will be filed along with the initial intake form, developed as a result of this partnership project, for teacher and student reference. Marty will also meet monthly with each student and the program counselor after program hours. For these meetings, the student would be given a copy of his/her file which included the initial intake form. The teacher and the counselor would review the forms beforehand in order to focus on the student's successes and in order to encourage further achievement. Students might wish to modify their original responses and / or goals. Deirdre's students will review objectives on a monthly basis, but she will ask students to write a brief comment about the list, what's been accomplished, problems, etc., each week. She started using the goal sheets with a pilot group of ten students in June.

The teacher and the counselor would review the forms beforehand in order to focus on the student's successes and in order to encourage further achievement.

In order to create the new intake form, we pulled items from the Toolkit and combined them with Marty's adapted EGAP. Some ideas from the Toolkit were added verbatim; others were modified in ways which we thought may produce more of a response from our students. We rearranged the order of questions on the intake a number of times. One major change we made to Marty's adapted EGAP was taking out the Career Goals and Personal Goals sections and substituted it with a section of questions that would encourage students to think more creatively and in-depth about goals and objectives.

At the June 3 project meeting, we were both fine-tuning what had been produced. Even as we passed out samples to other mentor-mentee partners at the meeting, we had to explain that we were going to rearrange certain sections.

We both felt that working together was a wonderful experience. The way that the partnership project was set up enabled us to accomplish a lot in a short period of time. Our meetings and conversations gave us a chance to problem-solve and brainstorm. Having a partner often encouraged us to see things from a different perspective and to get feedback so that the process of eliciting and implementing solutions was much more efficient. The larger project meetings gave us a further chance to reflect on the partnership and share ideas. All this in turn enabled us to better meet the needs of our students, which is our most important GOAL.

☑

FIGURE 1

Intake: Barnstable County House of Corrections

Full Name: ______________________________

Date: ______________________________

Date of Birth: ______________ Age: ______________

Place of Birth: (city) ______________ (state) ______________

First Language: ______________________________

Last grade you attended: ______________________________

Last grade you completed: ______________________________

Do you have a high school diploma: ______________________________

Do you have a G.E.D.? ______________________________

Do you have a college degree? ______________________________

Name and address of the last school you attented: ______________________________

____

Check one:

- ☐ White - Not Hispanic
- ☐ White- Hispanic
- ☐ Black- Not Hispanic
- ☐ Black - Hispanic
- ☐ American Indian
- ☐ Asian - Pacific Islander
- ☐ Other

What is the reason for wanting to attend Adult Education classes? ______________________________

____

____

I would like your experience in Adult Education classes to be pleasant and rewarding. Describe below your past experince in school. Tell me if it was happy or an unhappy one. If you did not complete high school, please tell me why you left school. Was it your choice to leave? Please tell me also what you hope to accomplish in these classes (receive a G.E.D., brush up on skills, etc.). Be specific. ______________________________

____

____

____

____

II. **History:** in this section I would like you to describe your past experience with school. Was your time in school a pleasant or unpleasant experience? Did you receive your diploma or G.E.D.? If you left school was it your own decision or were you asked to leave? Please be specific. ____________________

____

____

____

____

III. **Self-Rating:** This section of the questionnaire gives you a chance to think about your skills and communicate to the teacher what you'd like to learn and how you learn best. The education program here is designed to help you improve your skills and reach your goals. To make it work, you must communicate goals, strengths and needs as clearly as you can.

There are no right or wrong answers. The more information you can give in any answer, the better. You may use extra paper if you need more space for your answers.

My reading skills are: ☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Need Work

Do you understand most of what you read? ____________________

____

When do you read? ____________________

What do you like to read? ____________________

____

Is there anything that you really dislike reading? ____________________

My math skills are: ☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Need Work

What do you do best in math and what is difficult for you in math? ____________________

____

My writing skills are: ☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Need Work

Are you a confident writer? What do you like to write? ____________________

____

Identify and describe at least 5 personal achievements, skills, or good characteristics.

1. ____________________
2. ____________________
3. ____________________

4. ______________________________

5. ______________________________

Do you learn better by working with others or alone? Please explain. ______________________________

____

Do you learn best by watching someone else, by reading about something, by listening to someone, or by doing something yourself? Please give an example of something you learned well and how you learned it. ______________________________

____

____

If you do not understand a word when you are reading, do you look at the other words around it and try to figure out what it means (in context)? When have you done this? ______________________________

____

If you do not understand a word when you are reading, do you look it up in the dictionary? When have you done this? ______________________________

____

My favorite subject in school was ______________________________ because

____

The most memorable thing I ever learned in school was ______________________________

____

____

Describe a situation where you were able to accomplish something that you did not think you could do, or where you helped someone else to accomplish something. (examples: solving a problem between people, doing a budget, doing something good for a family member or friend, doing something good for your health.) ______________________________

____

____

Have you ever been unable to do something because you didn't have the necessary skills or information? Please describe. ______________________________

____

____

____

IV. **Goals:** In this section you should describe what you hope to accomplish in this program. Please be specific.

In one year I hope to ______________________________

____

____

I wish I could ______________________________

____

List two things that you have seen or heard about and you would like to understand better.

1. ______________________________
2. ______________________________

List at least 5 things that you are doing to get from here to there:

1. ______________________________
2. ______________________________
3. ______________________________
4. ______________________________
5. ______________________________

Other things I would like to learn: (Please describe any experience you have with the following.)

managing money effectively ______________________________

understanding pricing, discounts, etc. ______________________________

registering to vote ______________________________

getting a library card ______________________________

learning how to use the library ______________________________

getting involved in community activities ______________________________

learning about careers such as ______________________________

protecting my health effectively ______________________________

managing time effectively ______________________________

other ______________________________

V. **Interests**

In my free time I like to ______________________________

____

____

I have written or would like to write:

☐ letters to school ☐ papers ☐ advice to others
☐ stories ☐ news articles ☐ journal/diary
☐ songs ☐ poems ☐ essays

I like to read the following for enjoyment. Please list the title of anything you have read recently in any category

adventure ______________________________

mystery ______________________________

romance ______________________________

history ______________________________

sports ______________________________

music ______________________________

poetry ______________________________

religion ______________________________

horror ______________________________

TV and movies ______________________________

true stories ______________________________

self-help ______________________________

how to ______________________________

hobbies ______________________________

parenting ______________________________

science fiction ______________________________

magazines ______________________________

newspapers ______________________________

Monthly Plan

Name: ______________________________

Date: ______________________________

My goals for this month include the following: (Include page numbers, specific tests, writing, math skills, as well as understanding concepts and ideas, etc..)

1. ______________________________
2. ______________________________
3. ______________________________
4. ______________________________
5. ______________________________

Please feel free to make changes in your goals during the month and voice any concerns, questions in the space below.

Date **Student Comment**

____

____

____

____

____

____

____

Please use the back of this paper if you need more room.

FIGURE 2

Intake
Entry Employment Experience Program
Education Component: Initial Interview

Name: ____________________ Date: ____________________

Age: ____________________ First Language: ____________________

Educational Background:

Last school attended: ____________________

Last grade attended: _____ Last grade completed: ____________________

Date last attended: ____________________

This questionnaire gives you a chance think about and communicate to the teacher what you'd like to learn and how you learn best. The EEE program is designed to help you learn and reach your goals. To make it work, you must communicate goals, strengths and needs as specifically as you can.

There are no right or wrong answers. The more information you can give about any answer, the better. Feel free to use extra paper if you need more room to write.

SELF-RATING

My reading skills are: ☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Need Work

Please explain:

Do you understand most of what you read? ____________________

____

When do you read? ____________________

____

What do you like to read? ____________________

____

If you don't understand a word when you read, do you try to guess the word's meaning by looking at the words around it and fitting it into the story? Can you think of a time when you did this?

____

____

____

PERSONAL READING AND WRITING

I like to read for enjoyment (please list anything you've read recently in any category):

adventure ______

mystery ______

romance ______

history ______

sports ______

music ______

poetry ______

religion ______

horror ______

TV & movies ______

true-life stories ______

self-help ______

how-to ______

hobbies ______

parenting ______

science fiction ______

magazines ______

newspapers ______

I have written or would like to write:

☐ poems ☐ songs ☐ stories ☐ journal/diary ☐ essays ☐ school papers

☐ news articles ☐ letters ☐ advice to others

Other reading or writing skills you have or would like to have: ______

______

______

The best thing I ever read was ______

The best movie or TV program I ever saw was ______

I also enjoy:

☐ cartooning ☐ painting ☐ drawing ☐ singing ☐ Other

LIFE SKILLS

Describe a situation where you were able to help yourself or someone else accomplish something (some examples may include solving a problem between people, doing a budget, doing something good for your health, etc.): ______

______

______

______

Have you ever been unable to do something you really wanted to do because you didn't have the necessary skills or information? Please describe ______

______

A personal characteristic I would like to work on is ______

______

because ______

______

Name at least two things you've seen or heard about and would like to understand better

1. ______

2. ______

Would you rather read a good story or a news magazine? Why? ______

______

Would you rather listen to an older relative talk about your family history or listen to the news? Why?

______

Would you rather discuss personal and social values and how they fit into your life or how the body works? Why? ______

______

Name at least two other things you enjoy reading about or discussing (some examples might be hobbies, places you've lived, sports, current events or news you're concerned about, health, movies, music, etc.):

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Do you learn better working with others or alone? Please explain. ______________________

____

____

Do you learn best by watching someone else, by reading about something, by listening to someone or by doing something yourself? ______________________

____

Please give an example of something you learned well and how you learned it. ____________

____

____

Identify and describe at least 5 personal achievements, skills or good characteristics:

1. ____

2. ____

3. ____

4. ____

5. ____

Please list at least one thing which you can teach others ______________________

____

GOALS

In one year I hope to be ______________________________

____

____

____

I wish I could ______________________________

____

____

____

Think of at least 5 things you are doing to get from here to there:

1. ____________________
2. ____________________
3. ____________________
4. ____________________
5. ____________________

Other things I would like to learn (please describe any experience with the following):

managing money effectively ____________________

understanding pricing, discounts, etc. ____________________

registering to vote ____________________

getting a library card ____________________

learning to use the library ____________________

getting involved in community activities ____________________

learning about careers such as ____________________

protecting my health effectively ____________________

managing time effectively ____________________

Please add at least one other thing you would like to learn ____________________

____

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WEEKLY PLAN

Name: ____________________

Date: ____________________

My plan for this week is (include page numbers, specific tests, writing, as well as understanding concepts and ideas, etc.):

1. ____________________

2. ____________________

3. ____________________

4. ____________________

5. ____________________

Please write down the date each day you are in class and comment on what you accomplished and how class went that day. Feel free to change or add to your list above as the week goes on.

USE THE BACK OF THIS PAGE IF YOU RUN OUT OF ROOM

Day	Your Comments	Teacher Comments

Thoughts on Assessment

by
Lesly Desire and
Henry Joseph

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&
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Center
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The Log School English as a Second Language Program and the Haitian Multi Service Center in Boston have been working closely as a partnership to provide support services for families in Greater Boston. One of our objectives is to help immigrants make a smooth transition from their homelands to the United States. Another is to help them achieve their goals and to recognize this achievement by supporting them and teaching them the multiple skills needed to function in this country.

After attending last year's SABES-sponsored workshops on alternative assessment, we decided to explore the issues further and participated in The Partnership Project. We saw this project as a way to look at existing assessment tools being used in programs similar to ours in the state.

We worked together to analyze and adapt the tools in the Toolkit and would like to share some thoughts and experiences with other members who participated in the project. We spent six months in this project, not developing tools but instead *understanding* the tools and experimenting with one to see if it would meet the needs of our program and the students.

Initial intake and ongoing assessment procedures can sometimes be difficult for us as practitioners to understand. That was the case for us, too, although we have been assessing adult learners for a while. We had to first think about how our students learn and how they progress before we could evaluate and experiment with the tools in the kit.

We struggled from the start with the idea of alternative assessment and felt at first that we could not keep up with the dialogue. It took us a while and a lot of effort to come up with some practical explanation of how our learners learned and progressed and what tools would complement these styles. It was also difficult to measure students' learning capacity, especially adult immigrants whose goals and dreams have to do with financial independence. We saw one of our roles to be to make sure they have achieved academically.

We decided to try the monthly learning form to monitor our students' progress on an ongoing basis. We observed that they were a little intimidated by the length of the forms. They even said that the forms we showed them were too much to fill out every month. We had hoped that they would see the usefulness of monitoring progress monthly. The students who were not capable of really writing or reading were reluctant to spend so much time on the forms. The ones that could already read and write were more apt to agree to participate.

We chose some things from the Toolkit after much discussion. The long charts and logs easily scare students off regardless of their educational background. We found, however, that the process of doing alternative assessment – in this case, monthly learning forms – took time to be done and time to be accepted. We could not assess these learners in one day and needed a process that would look at their progress on an ongoing basis.

People, including instructors, needed to be patient with each other during the experimenting time. These forms also became part of the teachers' lesson plans, and alert teachers when things are not going well.

The Toolkit presented by The Partnership Project became an inspiration for all mentors and mentees. The GOALS project staff members have been wonderful in offering us resources and help. In sum, this project played an important role in the area of evaluation and our understanding of alternative assessment and forced us to ask a lot of questions about our students' learning and progress. The monthly tool with which we chose to experiment had a tremendous effect of the students who were learning to become more confident and independent and also in letting the teachers have a tool to monitor progress monthly.

☑

Self Assessment for the Beginner: A Goals Oriented Approach

by
Rudee Atlas and
Dan Wilson

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Center
East Boston, MA
&
North End Union
Boston, MA

During the 1993-4 academic year I had the opportunity to explore self-assessment techniques as part of the Partnership Project in cooperation with the Massachusetts Department of Education. My partner in this project was Dan Wilson, an ESL instructor at the North End Union in Boston, MA. Although we worked on modifying/developing our own assessment pieces we learned through working together that we were facing similar obstacles in assessing the beginning learner in a non-threatening meaningful way.

I grew up in Thailand and attended university there. Every time I took an exam, a question was raised in my mind: why must the test format be multiple choice? I preferred exams that asked questions and allowed me to express my opinions freely. I felt that I could present myself better that way, whether or not I learned something.

Now I am an ESL teacher in the United States at the East Boston Harborside Community Center. What I could not control as a student I can provide as a teacher. My students have very limited English communication skills. The level in class is varied and some students have no schooling at all, while others have finished university in their countries. The unschooled students tend to come from rural farming backgrounds and experience a number of obstacles. First is the obvious problem of beginning the educational process as an adult in a foreign country. But even more difficult is the element of fear: Can I survive in this country? Can I handle classroom learning? Will I be able to adjust to a very different culture? Will I ever understand the language and American customs?

These are just a few of the questions that can create a real fear in the minds and hearts of the ESL student.

As one can see, I was faced with a challenging task of instructing and assessing students of very diverse educational backgrounds who may also be dealing with intense fear and anxiety. How could I give them the same test?

I have been involved in Alternative Assessment for a few years. I was looking then for a tool that was less academic, related more to my student's lives and which would be non-threatening to beginning learners. We originally used the BEST test for our program but students did not answer all the questions for a number of reasons. I wanted to create something that was more relevant to their lives *outside* of class, like going shopping etc. I found that I was testing a lot of tools and was very excited to be using alternative assessment in my class. I also found that students needed to participate in these alternatives. They needed to have a good attitude towards participating and to be able to see the benefits of their assessment practices.

By trying out alternative assessment I

I learned that I can never use the same tool twice. I always have to adapt the tools according to the needs of each group.

gained insight into my own teaching. I learned that I can never use the same tool twice. I always have to adapt the tools according to the needs of each group.

THE PARTNERSHIP

I first met Dan in the Fall. We talked at length about our students and the obstacles we both faced in assessing their progress. Dan also teaches beginning learners with limited communication skills. He described his students as having the same fears and the same variety of educational backgrounds. He also felt that current assessment techniques were not appropriate for all the students in his classes and he had been using no system of student-driven assessment in his class.

The challenge before us was to help him develop a system which would achieve the following:

1) a student driven subjective self assessment;
2) a format that could be handled by those students with very limited communication skills in English.
3) a format that could be handled by students with little or no education, i.e., some that does not require a great deal of writing but which produces a document that can be kept for review and evidence of progress
4) a format that would be appropriately mature for all students.
5) a format that the students would find non-threatening

Dan and I shared some of the tools that I had been using in my class. I had been collecting student writing and binding the assignments together in chronological order. In this way I was creating a student journal of their writings. Dan liked the idea of giving the students frequent short writing assignments and using these to gauge the student's progress over time. Dan thought this approach was effective and also useful because it met all the requirements above. Dan implemented this in his class after the first meeting and found it successful.

At another meeting Dan and I discussed adding to the use of the journals in his class a tool for self assessment. Dan is very interested in using life skills instruction as a basis for class activity and discussion. He also expressed his belief that student learning should be goal oriented, i.e. that the student should consider his/her success in learning English to be linked to his or her success in achieving goals in life. This is critical since learning English for the sake of knowledge is not the ideal of most ESL students who need English to survive in a new country and culture.

In the early Spring I worked with Dan to develop goals-oriented techniques that met the five requirements we had set at our original meeting. We developed a monthly goals sheet for Dan's students to complete at the beginning of each month. The monthly time frame was selected because it was felt that it was long enough to track achievement, yet frequent enough for the students to experience an ongoing feeling of accomplishments *(see Figure 1)*.

For this first month Dan selected five life skills that he was intending to introduce in class during the month.. Each student was handed a form with a personalized title, e.g. "Maria's Goals—May 1994." Dan then asked the class if they wanted to learn how to "leave a message." When all students understood what was being asked of them, they answered the question by circling "Y" or "N" on their sheet. In this way the students were actually building their own curriculum, taking charge of the content of their class. Those subjects with low interest from students might not be taught that month or would be taught through a teaching assistant to those students that were interested.

Next the students showed how well they could do the task in English. They did this by drawing a picture of themselves on a line scale. It indicated that they had no ability at all *vis a vis* this task. If they pictured themselves on the far right it meant that they could do this task with full competence in English. Of course any level of competency in between these extremes could be represented as well. Again the students were providing the teacher with curriculum building assistance by indicating their strengths and weaknesses.

The students continued through the six pre-selected tasks answering first whether they wanted to learn the task and then how competent they felt in their ability to do the task. The students had set and prioritized their goals and the tasks to be learned, and what would be accomplished during the next month of classes.

Finally, the students had the opportunity to list up to three other goals they had. They listed such things as "learn how to fill out job applications," "supermarket product containers" and "talk to the teacher of my children." From these suggestions Dan was able to compile his curriculum for the following month. These suggestions became the tasks to be included on the next students' monthly goals sheet. Thus, from the point of introduction of these monthly goals sheets, the curriculum could potentially be 100% driven.

At the end of the first month Dan recirculated the student monthly goals sheet that had been completed previously. The students had the opportunity to reflect upon their perceived competency in the task of a month earlier. They were then invited to draw a new picture of themselves indicating their current perceived competence. All of the students who had attended the classes in which the tasks were taught drew pictures of themselves to the right of the original picture, i.e. closer to the goals of complete competence; and there in black and white was evidence for the teacher and student alike that the student was moving closer to competence. Both Dan and I believe that this periodic reflection is critical in maintaining student self esteem and encouraging the student to continue studying, to continue moving closer to their goals.

Both Dan and I believe that this periodic reflection is critical in maintaining student self esteem and encouraging the student to continue studying, to continue moving closer to their goals.

As indicated, this monthly goals technique accomplished the five requirements discussed at our first meeting. The assessment was based solely on student reflection and reporting. This form of self-assessment could be handled by students with very limited communication skills and those with little education since there was almost no writing to be done and the concept of goals and progress could be readily understood. None found the reporting to be childish; on the contrary, the students enjoyed drawing the little pictures of themselves and some drew self portraits. As a result of this technique the teacher was provided with a document that measured student progress incrementally.

It also went beyond the original five requirements in assisting in curriculum development, student involvement and control of the lessons, and student goal setting. Equally important is the fact that the technique takes very little time, roughly one half hour of class time per month and less than one hour prep time.

I learned a lot from working with Dan as part of the Partnership Project. I learned that my experiences and difficulties in teaching and assessing beginning learners are not unique. I am now more willing to try new things in my classes. I was able to share my ideas with Dan that led to the development of a new tool and I have learned from him as well. I hope that this relationship can continue and further facilitate our challenging jobs as adult educators. In this kind of relationship you are more willing to take risks and try new things and share ideas. This project helped me become aware of the tools I can use with my students and how they respond to them. Because of this awareness my students and I can connect and build a better relationship. The students can also establish a bond with one another and further improve their opportunities to learn and socialize in a school setting. I also realized the importance of working with students to change their attitudes about assessment and working with them to open up to new forms of assessment.

☑

FIGURE 1

Monthly Goals Sheet

Leave a message when telephoning Y N

Understand newspaper classified ads Y N

Fill out a job application Y N

Make plans to do something with and American friend Y N

Find telephone numbers in the phone book Y N

Use the yellow pages Y N

Work in Progress

Bottoms Up: An Alternative Self-Directed Readiness Training Program

by
Don Robishaw

Evaluation and
Motivational
Specialist

In the fall 1993 issue of *Adventures in Assessment, Vol. 5.* I discussed the need for pre-goal setting strategies.

> *. . . goal setting as a strategy can help some learners take control of their own learning and become motivated. But pre-goal setting strategies must be designed and implemented to better help adults develop confidence in their own ability to use goal setting as a strategy for learning.*

I also offered one group approach that could possibly increase the chances of goal setting being more effective and meaningful in Adult Literacy/Adult Basic Education (AL/ABE).

Unfortunately there are some adult learners who have had little experience in directing their own learning, thus may have problems with the group investigations I suggested, especially in light of the practitioner's need to give up control and ask the students to direct or manage their own learning.

Since writing that article I have developed and field-tested a similar, yet more complex approach. The purpose of this article is to share some of the critical dialogue of the students who participated in a pilot study that took place in May and June of 1994. They participated in a 14 hour training program called "Bottoms Up": An Alternative Self-Directed Readiness Training Program. It's goal is not only to increase the chances of goal setting being more effective, but also to help prepare students for self-directed learning strategies and participatory education practices inherent in some adult education programs.

WHY I DEVELOPED "BOTTOMS UP"

I developed the "Bottoms Up" program to help students move closer to self-directed learning as one leg of a much larger framework. I focused my efforts on the process that relates to just the learners and not the practitioners.

That full model — AGE (the Alternative Great Equalizer) — attempts to bring students and practitioners together as equals. For true participatory education (not manipulation) to take place, the following caveats must, at some point, be addressed:

1. Both the students and the practitioners have to have the same leverage and power for true participatory education to be successful. (Demartino, A.M., 1994)
2. Practitioners need to play the role of an observer and identify students who need to participate in an intervention in order to shed their excess baggage.
3. Most adult educators need to participate in their own brand of Readiness Training Program or in other words, an unlearning process.
4. Both students and practitioners need to first take part in a separate reflective processes in order to later come together as "near" equals.

5. This "ideal state" takes a considerable amount of time, in fact it has to be a continuous lifelong - unending process.

In this article I am presenting several student produced critical dialogues from the initial field-test of the first "leg" of the AGE model - "Bottoms Up." In two previous articles in the *All Right News*, January, 1994, "Reading and Writing Professionals or Literacy Workers" and May, 1994, "Diversity or Conformity," I suggest possible topics for practitioners who participate in an alternative unlearning process, the second leg. Personally I would love to see some of my colleagues who responded in the last issue, *Responding to the Dream Conference*, to work on developing a curriculum for the second leg of the AGE model.

THE ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT CONNECTION

Another incentive for developing "Bottoms Up" comes by way of all the progressive programs and practitioners who are developing exciting and innovative self-directed learning tools and methods used to assist students in learning how to manage their own learning. Why, we even have a journal devoted to a single aspect of external self-directed learning - *Adventures in Assessment*. There is a lot of potential for these innovations that help students:

1. Diagnose their own learning needs,
2. Develop and set goals,
3. Identify resources for learning,
4. Choose learning strategies,
5. Assess their own learning, and
6. Assist practitioners and learners in designing and evaluating adult participatory education programs.

"Bottoms Up" first deals with the internal side of self-direction (Robishaw, D.L., 1993), prior to adults learning to manage their own learning. It later guides and connects the learners to these new participatory education practices or alternative tools.

"Bottoms Up" may just be that "missing link" that brings all the other mosaic fragments into focus. It helps learners develop a more positive self-concept through

- unlearning the shame issue of returning to school as an adult;
- unlearning the 'blaming themselves' mentality;
- recognizing and giving themselves enough credit for overcoming barriers;
- developing the self-confidence needed to feel capable of doing academic work on their own or in a group, thus being able to manage their own learning and connecting; and
- making clearer the purposes of these alternative tools, strategies and methods, as well as preparing them for participatory education programs.

Specifically, some students need help developing self-motivation for learning and then channeling that motivation into the persistence needed to becoming self-directed. After students begin the critical reflection process inherent in "Bottoms Up", they will gradually gain the self-motivation and confidence needed to become the more complete form of self-directed learner, which includes lifelong learning.

Both the students and the practitioners have to have the same leverage and power for true participatory education to be successful.

Students participating in "Bottoms Up" will have the space to deconstruct their internal oppression and past experiences with schooling, to critically reflect upon the educational system and other issues and to participate in a dialogue with their cohorts. This self-directed readiness program offers the students opportunities to pursue the knowledge needed to overcome the above mentioned dispositional (internal) barriers that may interfere with meeting his or her needs, goals and interests in future programs or educational projects. After participating in the program students may then be able to make the appropriate attitudinal and behavioral changes necessary in order to accept learning in programs as a viable option.

THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The development of the program itself has been a five-year process. I had previously conducted inquiries into resistance, persistence and the situational, institutional and dispositional barriers adults faced when returning to school. I eventually narrowed that focus to specifically look at dispositional barriers. I combined what I learned through a brief review of the literature, directly through research projects conducted with students, and from my own self-reflections and the creation of a staged developmental model based on my own growth experiences, including taking part in all the activities that came with the turf, including dropping out of school (twice). An elaborate evaluation plan was also designed and conducted throughout the entire development process, but is not included in this article.

THE PROGRAM

There has been one trial run of "Bottoms Up" thus far, with two participants, one male and one female. The participants spent about 14 hours in seven workshops. In each workshop we examined two different, yet related issues in AL/ABE. In each of the seven components, the students were first asked to share with each other and the facilitator their opinions, perspectives and personal experiences on these issues. I served as the facilitator and began the process by presenting the topics for discussion with a brief statement, followed up by several discussion and probing questions. Later different opinions and perspectives were added to the discussion in the form of

- Fictitious case studies and role plays (dyads)
- Brainstorms
- Games
- Other activities

To make each separate workshop a success and more valuable the participants were encouraged to talk about their personal experiences, perspectives, opinions and values, as they related to the topics. Participants were also encouraged to go beyond their initial position by comparing, contrasting and weighing other positions or views carefully against their own.

DYADS/CRITICAL DIALOGUES

The first goal was to get the participants' perspectives, then to introduce outside perspectives through the dyads *(see Figures 1 and 2)* and then to continue the discussion process from there. The dyad and the following critical dialogue, *Resistance and persistence in schools,* make up one component.

All the critical dialogues in this article were extracted from the 14 hours of taped discussions that took place in May and June of 1994 at an adult education program located in Massachusetts. The names of the participants and their respective program have been changed to protect their anonymity.

Karla is about 30 years old with three children. She had been enrolled in a couple of other adult schools prior to enrolling in her current program. She did not complete formal schooling.

Sam is about 25 years old and single. He had been enrolled in this program for six months prior to joining "Bottoms Up". Sam did complete high school.

The boxed examples on the next two pages are two fictitious case studies (dyad) used in the third component - *Resistance and Persistence in Schools.*

CRITICAL DIALOGUES

COMPONENT 3 - RESISTANCE AND PERSISTENCE IN SCHOOLS

[Do some students resist schooling? How?]

Karla: Yes, they do. By not showing up. Sometimes when you do show up you get a little panicky, you get a little scared. There are some kids who tend to follow their parents. Like if their parents worked on a farm and that is what the father is looking for in the boys... and the son doesn't want to, he wants to become a lawyer or a doctor or just wants to be nobody. Sometimes when you try to make your son take over your business or be something you was they end up on the streets and homeless sometimes. I've seen it happen.

Sometimes they [teachers] force it, sometimes you have a teacher who won't say it out loud but that [soft voice] John belongs over here or Jane belongs over here. By color. John should be the machine operator or Joe should be in wood [shop] because some black people should be contractors - because that is all they deserve. He doesn't belong here because they have structured classes for lawyers, doctors, teachers . . . Sometimes the teacher offers scholarships to the kids. Sometimes they think that this white student, Jane deserves it, [soft voice] "Jane, take this home to mother and father and don't tell nobody." They do that. They do, it happens.

[Any other examples?]

Sam: Someone who goes in and is a clown or something probably. Kids do a lot of things to get the class laughing or something.

Not coming in, pretending to be sick, by getting into fights, by being bullies, taking money for lunch. Skipping class and being in the hallways walking around.

They have cliques. My sister use to go to school but she had to be there early to see her clique. Some people don't go to class they just hang out.

Karla: On my way to school today I saw a young lady coming from one of the schools. She had on a dress tighter than my finger. You could see her figure in it. High heels - like they had been "pulling tricks". They are presenting themselves as if you can approach me, here I am. No female should be allowed to come to school now a days - 1994 - dressed that

FIGURE 1

I. JOHN DOE ON GETTING ANGRY OR "IT WASN'T LEARNING THAT I DIDN'T LIKE; IT WAS SCHOOLING"

Vocabulary: 1. Rebel 2. Capable 3. Authority 4. Identify 5. Role

Question: John, were you a resister or a rebel in school?

Was I really such a troublemaker as a kid? Did I really have behavioral problems like they used to tell me? Why, for a while there they even thought I had a kind of learning problem.

Sure I acted up a little, but I still liked to learn new stuff. Even outside of school I liked to learn new things. You know, play with the bugs and birds and other creatures. I liked to learn - still do in fact. I was even capable of the academic stuff too. Why didn't I stay? Was it my fault? There I go blaming myself again. It wasn't my fault. They did a pretty good job of "locking me out".

I didn't like school and told the teachers I didn't like school. Why didn't they change the place if 75% of us didn't like it and left? Sure I resisted the school system and authority. They were the authority and were not going to listen to me or the other kids.

We got no respect. Oh they respected the kids who came in by bus, but not us. Why should I try so hard to be like them if they didn't respect me. The guys in the "projects" respected me cause I could fight pretty good. They respected me because I told the teachers that school *&##@. So sure I resisted schooling. Nobody in my neighborhood was going anywhere even if they finished school. It didn't make any difference to anybody if you stayed, and it didn't make any difference if you left. Maybe if it did make a difference to someone, but it didn't. So now I've got this "monkey on my back" because I left early, but what can I do about it now?

I can tell you what was wrong with school then and I can tell you what is wrong with school now - no respect. We got no respect! Kids need to be respected once in a while too. If they don't get respect in school they will find someplace else to get respect. If I was a resister, I wasn't the only one.

Questions:

1. Was John a resister? What in the story says that he was a resister?

Can anyone identify with John?

2. What caused him to resist?

3. John talks about a "monkey on his back". What is it? What can he do about it?

4. Are there other roles that the school system tries to force people to accept because of who they are? Examples Sex, class, race . . . .

5. What are some of the good points that a resister has? Can these good points be directed into something positive as an adult learner? What are some of the bad points about being a resister?

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FIGURE 2

II. TONYA SMITH ON DEVELOPING PERSISTENCE: SURE THERE ARE ALWAYS SETBACKS BEFORE SUCCESS

Vocabulary: 1. Possessed 2. Actually 3. Succeed 4. Environment 5. Support 6. Setback 7. Stubborn 8. Effort 9. Invented

Question: Tonya, were you a persister in school?

Was I really a persister in school? Yes, I had to be. My parents, teachers, coaches and classmates would not let me be anything else. For awhile I was so possessed with doing well in school it actually made me become sick. I would do anything to succeed.

My friends in school were so much like me too. The teachers, my parents and my friends always expecting me to do well. They were all just like me. But I liked it.

I liked school. The environment was great. There was always so much support for my special projects. Learning at a young age just "grabbed me" by the pants and wouldn't let go.

Oh I wasn't perfect. There were always setbacks before success came. But I was very stubborn. I wouldn't be defeated. I learned from my father early on about Tom Edison. He invented the first light bulb. He invented many other things too. He made more mistakes in life than anybody. But he persisted. Why he once made 9,999 mistakes in a row. He kept "getting up off the ice". Finally, on the 10,000th try his little talking machine said the words, "Mary had a little lamb." If there is one word that means more to me than anything it is persistence.

You have to know, that when I went to school most women were being raised to stay home and become good housewives. Well that wasn't for me. Much later I did all that stuff but that was not on my mind as a kid in school. I knew, if I persisted and worked hard that I would be rewarded for my efforts. It is OK to stumble and "fall down" and make mistakes, but you have to keep "getting up off the ice". There is a big world out there and you have to "unlock the door". Nobody is going to help you "open the door". I didn't have any extra tutoring like some of my classmates. Oh yes, I did it all on my own and I did it my way!

Schools offer equal opportunities for all. I believe that the average person can fulfill most goals. Anybody can do what I did, as long as they develop persistence and work hard. I knew that. My parents knew that too. Everybody knew that. Some people persisted and others wasted their time. Yes I was a persister, now I am a full professor.

Questions:

1. Was Tonya a persister? What in the story points out that she was a persister?
2. What caused her to persist?
3. Why did Tonya like school?
4. What did Tonya mean when she said, "learning grabbed me".
5. What are some of the good points that a persister has? Can these be directed into something positive for adult learners? What are some of the bads points of being a persister?

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way. If you allow them to do that, they are going to get away with anything and they are going to feel like they can. When they start they are going to start to rebel, like they are doing "anyways". *[What cause some students to resist schooling?]*

Karla: I've been there. There were two monkeys on my back. I'll say three. One in school - teachers, coming home and classmates. There was no teacher support, student support and family support. You have got to find that support somewhere.

Sam: Making fun of you. My father used to make fun of me when I was a kid. "Rank" on me and stuff. My brothers would "rank" on me.

[What about the ones who persist?]

Karla: When you find out that your child likes school and they are sticking to it and learning is interesting to them and they keep going you have no problems. It is not hard to steer your child in the right direction either. They are mainly steering themselves. You have already put the work into it. You have done your job.

[What are some examples?]

Sam: Steve ________. He wore glasses and the whole... a "nerd". An (A) student, triple (A) student, whatever you want to call it. Everything comes easy for him. He just wants to study. He doesn't have a girl, doesn't want a girl. But he is really smart. Comes in early, wants more homework, likes everybody, a nice guy, with a neat little tie. Participates more like in chess and different kinds of clubs.

[What causes them to persist?]

Sam: If they like school they have fun. If you don't like it or have a bad time you are not going to have a very good time. They get picked on. [But when they become adults...] you want to be them; they get the money.

Karla: Parents. They were persistent in making sure that she... helping her to reach her goals. The student also, her classmates, her teachers. It has got to be everybody.

Sam: A happy childhood. Her mother and father treated her. . . . She liked learning, she liked school.

[What are some characteristics of a persister?]

Karla: On time for class.

Sam: Don't let things bug 'em.

Karla: Get there homework done, ask for more work, address problems in schools, be more open and persistent.

[Are there any bad characteristics of a persister?]

Karla: Yes there are! Sometimes a student who is a persister or perfect tends to get on your damn nerves. Sometimes they start trouble. Yes they do. Sometimes their head gets real big - chip on the shoulder - and your head is up in the air.

Sam: Arrogant!

Karla: Better than anybody and they

realize it. Some kids they are very mean and nasty.

Sam: Some kids take care of them real quick, trip them or put gum on their seats or put something [signs] on their butts - kick me or something like that. No one needs it [their arrogance]

[Can this characteristic relate to adult students?]

Karla: Adult students who are going back to learn again can benefit from when they were a child [experiences]. That support for me as a child wasn't there.

Sometimes when I come to school now as an adult and think back, that if I had thought about it more clearly and stuck to it more when I was younger.... If there is something wrong in the home then the child will not be able to function right in school. It comes from home. It is never to late to learn, but it is best to get it while you are young. It is never too late.

Like now I go to the adult learning class and everybody is equal - cause everybody understands everybody.

[Solidarity?]

Sam: Yeah, kind of like that.

Karla: It sends an electricity through my system and I feel good. When I don't attend class I hurt myself more. It is not being done purposely. We all have to study more to learn.

Sam: You know the teachers in there are pretty nice too. They are real different, they are easy going. They are not, you know, ... sometimes teachers have that little [chip on their shoulder]. It seems like, yes a chip on the shoulder - arrogance. "I'm better than you because I'm teaching you." These people [in this adult program] are like one of you.

ADDITIONAL DIALOGUES

For the sake of space, only the dialogues between the participants follows from other discussions. Again these critical dialogues are in the participants' own words. Both participants were involved in the editing process. They were offered the opportunity to "edit out" any comments that they were uncomfortable with.

COMPONENT 4 - RESISTANCE & PERSISTENCE IN ADULT EDUCATION

[Why do some adults come back and others don't?]

Karla: Some adults need to. It took me a while to find a program. This program is right for me. The _________ program wasn't. It was self work - you worked on your own. It just wasn't there for me. I've been there twice. Then I went to another program that wasn't for me. This program _____is excellent. I like it. From this one I achieved a little bit more.

Some of them feel it is too late or they are too old. Some of them just don't care. "Why should I learn how to read. What am I going to benefit from it.

Sam: Because they have kids - barriers - a wife, a job. [are kids a barrier?] No, but in this day and age you might need two jobs. Something has got to be done with those kids. You do not want a stranger down there. Do you know what I am

Like now I go to the adult learning class and everybody is equal – cause everybody understands everybody.

saying? I don't think it is a barrier, you have to do what you have to do. Schooling is out there some place. If you can do it, you can do it. [some things are more important than school] Yeah, putting clothes on the kids. They are your kids, you had them. If you didn't want them you wouldn't have them. I remember when I was growing up we had a wise mouth and would say, what do you think you own us? When you get older you start to think, maybe they could own you - just a tiny little bit.

Karla: Some people can't make it because they simply don't know how to take the bus. There are some that can't read at all so it looks different, especially if you come from a different country. But I came from __________[USA]. It is just that the words look different to me. I couldn't articulate it [the problem], but now I can.

> *I had kids and they told me that I was more important than my children, and that is a lie. Your education is important and not your children? She told me that. That is what she told me.*

[What about inside barriers - psychological and emotional stuff?]

Sam: Attitude, probably.

Karla: Self conscious and self confidence. They have to have enough confidence in themselves. Some have a handicap and they' re afraid of that too. They are embarrassed.

Sam: [Some] They are bullheaded.

Karla: Some just lay in bed all day and feel comfortable doing that - no job, no life, no nothing. Why interfere and go to school and get an education.

[Developing persistence in Adult Education programs]

Sam: Keep on coming!

Karla: Try not to miss and if you do, study at home - study more at home. When you study more at home it helps. It goes a long way.

[Critical vocabulary words]

Karla: Criticize - Some people come here and they are not employed. They are on AFDC or Social Security and others work. They [some of those who work] seem to think that they are more better than you. Anyone can feel the tension. It exists. It happens.

Sam: Some of them are just mean.

[What about other programs?]

Karla: I dropped out of the _________ program and went back to the _______. program. I had kids and they told me that I was more important than my children, and that is a lie. Your education is important and not your children? She told me that. That is what she told me.

Sam: You are important too, though.

Karla: I am, but I had those kids. They didn't ask to come here. If I have to drop out, which I do not want to.... if I feel that I have to drop out I will drop out. They are probably saying, she wants to drop out and lay up.

[If the problem is the program, how do they need to change?]

Karla: Some of the programs really need to stick to the level. "Well we don't have this here for you, but we have got it for Maria who comes from Puerto Rico." I was in a program, it really made me mad when I realized that she was in a level that I should be at. They had me doing math and she was reading. I said why are you reading? I'm reading so I can learn how to speak better English. It was the same level I should have been at. The only thing is that she is in it for a different reason. I'm in it because I need to learn [to read]. There are some people who don't know how to be a teacher. If you are not getting it, it makes a lot of difference. It is not fair to you. Who wants to come into class everyday - adding? Do you know what I'm saying? I want to read. The most important thing to me is reading. They should try to meet everybody's goals [needs].

Sam: Boy, you are really a very angry women.

Karla: _______ program should be mainly for people who want their GED. They are a little bit unorganized. That is a waste of funding. It is not set up right and _______ program is. It offers a lot for everybody's level.

Sam: They [_______ program teachers] are laid back too. Their nose "ain't" up in the air. Teachers should be less uppity.

Karla: The program I was in, they were truly uppity.

[How else should programs change?]

Sam: Programs got to do their own things.

Karla: I don't think they should promote someone that they know is not ready for it. That is wrong and unfair.

Sam: It is a time bracket too. When the government is funding it there is always a time bracket. Like 48 weeks or 24 weeks or 30 weeks or something like that.

Karla: Even though the government is funding it, it is still unfair to us.

There is a time bracket and that is true, but they should be open enough to let us know that this is not for you. That there are other programs. If they are that concerned, but some of them are not.

I found out about this program through the _____ program - through a student. Then my husband came in and found out about it. He brought me here and got me involved. He was looking for programs for me. He asked around. We were both looking.

The ______ program is strictly self-dependent, you have to do it on your own. The teachers can not help you as much either. They make you take a test. I took a test. I don't even know what the hell I marked off. I could have been marking off something and [then] they come and pick me up and wrap me up in padding and beat me up. That is unfair. Sometimes the government "sticks it" to you.

It is there to help you. It is just that the helpers that they have need help themselves. They do. When I was going, this women was a college something and she was all into herself.

Sam: Well that is college. They are "profethers" [poking fun at elitism]. As soon as you get to be a "profether" ha, ha, ha.

Karla: So I left. They were really uppity.

Sam and Karla - Barriers: Transportation, knowing how to get there, finding out if there are programs for you and your children, finding the right program, self doubt, respecting authority of teachers, sometimes depression, fear, peer pressure and courage.

[What can students do themselves in order to develop persistence?]

Sam: Study!

Karla: Stick to it - study. Be persistent about asking about programs. Be persistent about getting involved in programs. Be persistent about getting there. Be persistent about finding out what programs your kids can get involved in while you are at the program. Be persistent in knowing everything. Ask the teachers questions. Ask the students.

Feel proud about what you have achieved. Feel proud about pushing yourself. When you push yourself and once you get it you can feel proud about it.

Sam: Get tokens, get a license and try to get a descent car. If you don't have the money try to borrow somebody's car or go for a walk.

Karla: Find out the location and make sure it is not rough. Be persistent about getting there. Be on your toes.

[Let teachers know how they learn best and how they feel about learning.]

Karla: Yes it is important because if you don't say anything you will be in the same level you are in. It is important so you can reach the level you want to reach.

Sam: Well if the teachers are ok with it. Some teachers don't like that.

[Make school a priority]

Karla: Especially if you are not working. Those who do not have a job, that can be a priority. It can be second priority if you have children.

[Make sacrifices]

Karla: You got to take that time to sit down and study.

[Wait for the learning to grab you?]
Karla: No, never wait for anything to grab you, you grab it! Cause if you wait for someone to come and give you something... That is like waiting here and Sam will bring a teacher by for me. Never wait and be persistent.

[Feeling proud?]

Karla: Feel proud about what you have achieved. Feel proud about pushing yourself. When you push yourself and once you get it you can feel proud about it. [Is that the same as chip on the shoulder?]

Sam: No I don't think so. Chip on the shoulder, you think you are something. Proud is you feel good. Chip is outside.

[Open up]

Sam: I don't know about that. Open up a bit. Maybe a little bit, but not a lot.

Karla: To me it means to be more open about yourself. Why you are in the program. Open up more about your lack of reading.

Sam: That is alright, but I wouldn't ... I don't trust people. I know. I got "screwed" too many times.

Karla: I have a problem with trusting people - even trusting my spouse.

Sam: People in particular. Some people, they are all hypocrites.

Karla: I'm not really ready to let my guard down. I'm not ready to let someone come in and help me too much. I am independent. Sometimes it is alright to let someone help and not be so independent. But when I feel that, that person is helping too much and taking away my independence I get scared, panicky, defensive.

[Keep a dream]

Sam: Well whatever you want to be. Keep the spirit.

COMPONENT 5 - PERSISTENCE & MANAGING YOUR OWN WORK

[Besides yourself, who else can help you develop persistence? How?]

Karla: Teachers. By asking you if you took out a book to read or did you study at home. Find out! And if it is not being done, be more persistent about it.

Sam: Your wife, spouse, mother and father.

Karla: My son helps me. He says ma, are you going to read a book today? Sometimes I say no. He says why not? What are you doing? I'm usually watching TV when I should be reading a book or practicing on the computer. I forget words a lot. I forget what I'm writing and I forget how to spell. It is usually the same words. I ask my son to spell for me. He says you are still asking me the same words. He says to think about it. So I have to really get into what I'm doing. I need to do that.

Sam: Give you a good kick in the butt and say get going. [Is that helpful?] Oh I think it is. The kick would hurt a little bit. Why don't you just unplug the TV and read?

Karla: I don't have to unplug it. I just assign myself a seat at the table.

[What about self-directed learning?]

Sam: You have to make it to the class. You have to be in the class before you do anything "anyways". You have to get in the class and learn.

Karla: It means doing your own work. You are going to a class and managing your own work. You are doing that assignment that they are giving you. It can be math, it can be science, it can be about words or compound words, writing a letter. It could be adding & subtracting. But it is a program you enter into and you are doing it on your own.

[Is there a connection between persistence and Self-directed learning?]

Sam: Yeah, persistence going to class. You want to learn. Keep on coming to class. Make the class interesting. Yeah, keep people off [on their toes] their feet. It gets boring just sitting there for a few hours at a time - off balance, give them things to do so they don't get bored.

Karla: It [persistence] is motivating you to be more independent. You are learning how to be more independent.

There are games they can play, even with adults they can play games. Games to help our minds think more and get that energy up - motivate our brains. Give us ideas.

[Have good teachers?]

Karla: In the adult literacy programs there are good teachers. That about sums it up for me. They know what they are doing. They interview the right people. [Do they ever ask the students opinions when hiring new teachers?] No, some programs do and they should do it at all programs. If they were to do it here... I think I speak for all of us. We can all say that we have good teachers here. They make us feel comfortable. I don't feel uneasy.

[Is talking important?]

Sam: Communication!

Karla: The teachers talking to the students individually and finding out what are their goals. What do they want to do and what they are there for?

They communicate with the students. You are not there like a number. We are not just there to them. The government funds it and they are doing the right thing.

[A student once told me, "this is our turf"; students can tell if the program cares - how can you tell?]

Sam: Well they just "flip you off", like [programs that don't care]. It is like if they say four words to you and walk away from you or they just don't care about your grade. They give you an (F) no matter what you do. They give you whatever they want to give you even if it is below what you think you should have got.

We all help each other sometimes. If the teacher is somewhere else we just ask the others students. Teamwork!

[How about a pat on the back for coming back to school?]

Karla: Yes, for coming to school.

Sam: You are supposed to come to school "anyways", Karla?

Karla: Wait a minute, Sam! They should pat on the back, but give you a little something, not an award. But if they have perfect attendance or something like that, a gift certificate or something like that. It will set an example for the ones who don't.

Sam: Maybe the ones who don't come in don't want to be there.

Karla: Not necessarily, Sam. There are thousands of problems in some peoples lives. Sometimes there are things like... health-wise, then there are children and then there are doctors and sickness. Somebody could be taking care of a mother - running errands for that person.

Sam: Did you ever hear of tutors?

[Students need to be treated like everyone else]

Sam: They should. You got like, you come in and maybe he doesn't know how to do something yet.

Karla: We all help each other sometimes. If the teacher is somewhere else we just ask the others students. Teamwork!

[Show students progress?]

Karla: We have goals we want to... [achieve]. Here they don't give tests. Here they take you and say like... Give you some pointers. They don't [give tests]. They would if you asked. I wonder if they need to do that? I would like to [have a test].

Sam: Some people get nervous. My hands use to shake. They tell you, you are going to have a test this Friday. I just couldn't do it. I'd do the questions and as soon as the test finished I forgot.

Karla: I got frustrated because the words just .... they look so much alike to me as an adult. I was given a lot of tests that I didn't pass.

[What can others learners do to help there classmates develop persistence?]

Sam: See what the program is all about and all that.

Karla: Tell them. We do! We tell the students about the program - the different areas and the different times. There are options, there is math, there is reading time. Options is when you play games and usually it is a learning game.

Well yes, the students, the students are nice, real nice to each other.

Sam: They don't rank on anybody. We are grownups, you can't do that.

[What can family and friends do to help students develop persistence?]

Sam: They can give you less grief. Like if you are married or have kids your spouse will take care of them while you are doing your homework.

Karla: It is going to cause extra work. That means you are going to have to figure out when to cook supper, when to set that table and have supper.

If you are single it is a matter of you making time for yourself.

Sam: Let the kids do it.

Karla: Yeah, teamwork! Then after that you have got time to study.

Sam: You can do it in between soap operas.

Karla: You can do it in-between cooking too.

[Karla, before you talked about managing your own work.]

Karla: 1. Knowing what you need, 2. Developing strategies to get their goals.

Sam: 3. Choose materials to help you. 4. You should know enough about yourself and what kind of learning strategies or the different ways to solve problems that work best for you.

Karla: 5. Evaluating your own learning.

[Are persistence and managing your own work connected?]

Sam: Yes they are. I think so. Sure. Yeah. Like um....

Karla: Like getting yourself to the program - involving yourself in the classes, in options and all kinds of things. Finding out other choices. Just being persistent and asking the teachers for more work and help.

CONCLUSION/REFLECTIONS

I need to next conduct an additional field-test(s), based partially on recommended changes from the participants in the initial field-test. The most significant change will be to increase the size of the group, modify some dyad activities, using some of the critical dialogues from the first trial run as readings in the next field-test, and improve the group editing process in developing their own critical dialogues, by putting an emphasis on it being more of a participatory activity, rather than simply a task that needs to be completed.

Three months after completing each trial run I will return to the field-test site in order to determine if there had been any continued movement on the part of the participants towards becoming self-directed and whether or not this "stuff" stuck.

WHAT HAVE I LEARNED SINCE CONDUCTING THE FIRST FIELD-TEST

Prior to starting the program I gave both participants a pre-test. I also gave them the same test again at the end of the program. It will also be given again three months after the end of the program — along with an interview — and used to form part of the basis of an interview guide.

After each workshop I listened to the tape and then filled out an observation sheet. It was basically a scaled checklist of indicators (30) that I developed. It was mostly based on the intended learning outcomes of the program and one unintended learning outcome that I became aware of after the second component.

To be brief, Karla initially indicated that she blamed herself because she had to return to school as an adult, was ashamed to be back in school as an adult and was incapable of doing academic work on her own. According to her post-test results, Karla indicated that she has stopped blaming herself, is not ashamed to be back in school as an adult and sometimes feel capable of doing academic work on her own. In all she has developed a more positive self-concept.

My own observations were in agreement with what Karla had indicated on the post test. It was also clear that she recognized and gave herself credit for overcoming many barriers in returning to school. (The pre-post test of this particular ILO was faulty and needs to be redesigned.)

Sam on the other hand had finished high school and did not have as negative a self-concept of himself as Karla before starting the program. There was still some indication of positive movement in the right direction.

My own observational checklist indicated a little more. But for Sam the biggest improvement area may have come about as a result of what he learned by being in the same group with Karla. Developing more of a sense of critical awareness became an unintended learning outcome during the second component of the program. Over the course of the next five workshops Sam appeared to be developing more of a sense of critical awareness. Some of the indicators of this were that the participants were:

1. Verbally critiquing the educational system
2. Breaking through apathy
3. Developing an awareness of the causes of problems

4. Recognizing that change comes from the bottom
5. Planning to or getting more actively involved in activities that propose to bring about change

From reading the critical dialogues, it was apparent that Karla had a keen sense of critical awareness. Sam was more "laid back" and willing to give the system time to work. By the end of the program he was developing more critical awareness.

This is only an evaluation research project. I'm certainly not going to attempt to generalize from two participants. But it did help these learners and I did learn from them.

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Note to Program Directors:
Any one interested in the "Bottoms Up" Program please call (508) 458-9782 or write:

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What Counts?

The Right Answer: There Is More Than One
Adult Diploma Program Math Research

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The Adult Diploma Math assessment project was a collaboration of Kenneth Tamarkin and Susan Barnard. Kenny is a member of the Math team and Susan is the Program Administrator for the Adult Diploma Program (ADP) at SCALE. We wanted to update SCALE's ADP Math Assessment to reflect the NCTM standards, specifically math as problem solving.

The premise of the ADP is to earn a high school diploma by demonstrating proficiencies in life-skills based competencies that have components of reading, writing and math interwoven throughout the curriculum. In order to start the ADP process, students must have an eighth grade reading comprehension level (Form 4B of Nelson) if a native English speaker, and a 7th grade reading level if a non-native speaker; an eighth grade math level; and the ability to write a paragraph with 90% accuracy in structure, grammar and spelling.

Over the years, we have identified critical thinking as the weakest skill area. We found that we can teach to the ADP math entrance test and students can quickly pass. But given a similar calculation, or problem out of context or with a change in format, students are not transferring their skills. This project was an opportunity to see how students would respond to a questions that could have more than one answer. After all, isn't that what life is all about?

In our plan to implement the project, we targeted students who attended ADP intake/orientation sessions (during which they completed an ADP math pre-test), so we could establish some indication of the person's current mathematical abilities. As we became more involved in the project, however, our target group expanded to include an ABE class, and ADP preparation class, a class at Quinsigamond Community College, and a few staff members. In total we involved 36 participants in our project: 30 students; 6 staff. The profile of the students varied greatly in reading levels, nationalities, ages, and educational backgrounds. The common factors were that all students were over 18 years of age, all had the goal of achieving a high school credential, and all were motivated to attend classes without stipends.

To address our goal of including more problem-solving skills in the ADP math curriculum, we developed a set of six open-ended math questions, all of which had a range of correct answers. In order to focus on problem solving rather that computational skills, we wrote all the questions so that they could be correctly answered using whole numbers, though some participants chose to use decimals or fractions in answering some problems. The directions stated that a problem could have more than one answer, but only one answer was required to be written down. Our criteria for success were to have questions that both drew the participants in and revealed their thinking; A follow up interview sheet was developed to gather individual input from the participants—including their reaction to the test questions, the test format and the test purpose.

We hoped to find out whether they considered the new questions fair or unfair, easy or hard, and clear or confusing. We particularly wanted to find out if the participants recognized that the new questions were meant to challenge their thinking skills. Each participant was individually interviewed and the answers recorded on the interview sheet.

The chart on the last page provides an overview of our results, the score on the ADP math pre-test, and the new questions, along with a graph displaying the relationship of pre-test and new questions scores.

To understand the relevancy between this test and the six new questions we asked, it is helpful to understand the scoring. In the pre-test, the highest possible score is 28. If students score between 18-28, a quick 1-3 hour math review usually brings their math abilities to the level where they can pass the math entrance diagnostic; a score of 10-17 usually requires an ABE class from 3 months to a year.

On our six math questions, the highest score could be 6, with credit given for partially correct answers. As we began scoring the six questions, we found it necessary that one person do the scoring in order to achieve consistency. Otherwise, with more than one answer possible and partial credit given, each scorer's bias could distort the scores. As a follow up task to this research, we need to standardize scoring criteria, especially for partial credit.

When asking people to participate, we said we were thinking about revising the ADP math curriculum and needed their help and input. None of the test sessions were times; students were assured there was no penalty for guessing. The participants' willingness to work with us and give us honest and complete feedback was outstanding. Word of the project spread and we had teachers asking if they could try the questions with their students. (Those results are not included in our findings.)

We decided to write up the results of our findings separately and then met to discuss our findings. To our surprise, our write ups were strikingly similar.

QUESTION 1: You have $100 to share among three people. You don't have to divide the money equally, but no person can have less than $25 . How much does each person have?

We intentionally picked numbers that couldn't be divided evenly and stated that the three people did not have to get the same amount. Yet, we found that most participants wanted to be fair by dividing the money equally in three ways, giving each person $33, or even $33.33, often losing sight that the amounts; once divided, should add up to $100. One participant, while being interviewed, commented, " of course we divided everything evenly. We're parents.

QUESTION 2: You go to the grocery store with $25 in our pocket to buy milk, orange juice, bread and shampoo. What other items would you buy so

that you would go home with no less that $10.00 in your pocket? How much money would you have left?

Grocery items:

bread	*$1*	*cookies*	*$2*
spaghetti	*$1*	*tooth paste*	*$2*
cat food	*$1*	*cucumbers*	*$1*
cheese	*$4*	*milk*	*$2*
pancake mix	*$1*	*orange juice*	*$2*
fish	*$4*	*ice cream*	*$3*
lettuce	*$1*	*lemons*	*$1*
shampoo	*$4*		

People seemed to particularly enjoy this question, probably because people love to shop. If they bought only the required items, they would have $16 left, which was a correct answer. Yet, people seemed to focus on the $10, opting to buy more, going home with exactly that amount. Other people did not organize or label their work and became confused, sometimes thinking $10 more needed to be spent and forgetting they needed to go home with $10. Overall, this question had the highest rate of correct answers.

Question #3: We showed them two jars and said: There are 10 pieces of candy in one jar. Estimate the number of pieces of candy in the other jar.

The other jar contained 105 pieces of candy wrapped in cellophane. The idea was to see if people's answers would be in the ballpark. We decided a range of 30 pieces in either direction would be an accepted answer (because Kenny guessed 130 and didn't want to be wrong.) A surprising number of people got this answer wrong; quite a few answered 70. The problem was the paper added extra volume and the candy could be tightly or loosely packed, making it difficult to estimate accurately. Participants who guessed 50 or below also had severe problems with computation and seemed to lack basic number sense. We would alter this question if we make it a permanent part of ADP assessment. We would use M&Ms, beans or some other unwrapped, regularly shaped, small object as the standard so that the volume estimation could be more consistent.

Question #4: Draw a rectangle whose perimeter is 8 inches.

In this question, participants had to know what a rectangle and perimeter are. The standard approach to this question is: What is the perimeter of a rectangle whose sides are 3, 1, 3, 1? The question also emerged, "Is a square a rectangle? Yes, it is. There were two whole number correct answers: A square with 2 inch sides and a 3 inch by 1 inch rectangle. Most people drew the 3 by 1 rectangle. We also accepted as correct a 2 1/2 by 1-1/2 inch rectangle, since we did not require that the answer had to be in whole numbers. One-third credit was deducted if the lengths of the sides of the rectangle were not labeled. If we implemented this question, we would directly ask for the sides to be labeled, since this requirement was not entirely clear. A number of people did not even attempt this question, considering it too hard. Others drew 8 by 1 inch or 2 by 4 inch rectangles, mistaking area for perimeter.

Question #5: A room is 15' by 12'. You need to place a wood burning stove that is 3' x 2' in the room. The stove must be at least 1' from any wall. Draw a floor plan that shows where the stove can be located.

This question encouraged more creativity. Although there were many correct answers to this question, many participants did not even attempt it, again stating that the question was too hard. Some people did draw good floor plans, but did not label the dimensions, missing the importance of clearly communicating their conclusions. During the interview, participants said they wondered if the plan should be drawn to scale or if they should label things. We would alter the question to make clear that the dimensions and distances need to be written on the diagram.

Question #6: 250 - 74 + 120 = 296. Using these numbers, write a word problem.

This question also required a bit more creativity and the answers were fun to read. Some were quite entertaining and creative, as well as being correct, but many people had difficulty writing an accurate word problem. Participants had the most difficulty phrasing a question that would lead someone to write an answer. Instead, many included the answer in their word problem. For example, one word problem said, "I have 250 $ in the Bank. I took 74 from it to pay my bill, and the next week I deposit 120 now my balance from the bank is 296 $." We feel that clarity in the directions is needed. Something like: *The answer should not be stated in your word problem.*

On our math survey we asked participants to rate the problems from 1 to 5 in the following categories: Fair to Unfair, Easy to Hard and Clear to Confusing. Most students thought that the questions were Fair and Clear, responding to these questions with a 1 or a 2. The Easy to Hard question mostly received 3's.

During the interviews, people who did best on the traditional test and very well on the new questions tended to be particularly enthusiastic. Some comments were "It makes you think", "It was fun." The few negative reactions came mostly from people who had done poorly on both the traditional test and the experimental questions. They had comments such as "it was confusing," and a number of these poor math achievers were unsure exactly why we were trying to do this project. However, overall, we were pleased to find out that almost everybody was very cooperative and actually enjoyed being asked for their input before changes were implemented.

In analyzing our statistics, we found that of the 14 participants who got 1/2 or less of the ADP pretest correct (14 or below), only 4 got 1/2 (3 or more) correct on the new questions; only one got 4 out of 6 correct. Of those 16 participants who got more than 1/2 correct on the ADP pretest (15 to 28), only 2 scored below 1/2 correct (less than 3) on the new questions.

The results raise some interesting questions. Is there a significant correlation between computational skills and reasoning skills? Can someone who was unsuccessful learning math in a computation-oriented program learn more effectively in a problem-solving oriented program?

The open-ended questions were definitely more interesting to score. The variety of answers and approaches gave great insight into how the student was thinking. The wrong answers were particularly helpful in showing how an individual approached a problem, and also when the working of the problem was open to misinterpretation. All our questions met our criteria; we just need to refine and revise our directions.

Our conclusion is that we should proceed with altering the ADP tests and curriculum to include open-ended questions and problem-solving skills. We believe this will create a richer, more relevant experience that will translate well into improved functioning and critical thinking in everyday life. We also thought that it was important to give people options in the testing situation, since that more closely reflects real life than exclusively having questions with only one correct answer. The correlation that we observed between achievement on the computation-oriented exam and the problem solving oriented questions also suggests to us that there is a role for effective computational instruction and that progress in problem-solving skills can indeed be meaningfully measured and evaluated.

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Working with Industry

Authentic Assessment in the Workplace

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C&K Components is a switch manufacturing company based in Newton, MA. The company has had an ESL program for approximately five years. For an 18 month period from October, 1992 through December, 1993 (three 20-week cycles) the program was funded by a federal grant. The program always included two classes running simultaneously, although for a 10-week period in the fall of 1993, four classes ran simultaneously. I was the Site Coordinator/ Instructor at C&K during the 18 month grant period, and for an additional 20-week cycle after the grant period ended, teaching two classes each cycle. Another instructor (Elinor Pitkin) taught the additional two classes in 1993; these classes were added because there was money left in the budget. It was discovered though that production could not handle having that many workers off the line at the same time, so after that we returned to offering only two classes. Most of the participants in the program work as assemblers and machine operators, although there have also been some stockroom clerks and line and unit leads.

We (the instructors and Workplace Education Coordinator at JVS) used an initial assessment tool for the purpose of placing students in one class or the other based on their abilities and levels. For the first cycle of classes, the levels were predetermined based on the needs and wants of management: one class was for those who held semi-supervisory positions (line and unit leads), assumed to be advanced. The other was for beginners. Management wanted to help those in semi-supervisory positions, in particular, those individuals they felt would be able to offer something to the company. In particular management hoped that by helping leads learn work-related topics, the leads in turn would be able to train their line workers. For example, management wanted the instructor to teach leads how to read and understand work orders so that they could turn around and teach this skill to others.

Management had the same goal for assemblers in the lower level class: that they would learn work-related skills and then teach them to their co-workers on the line. They also wanted to groom those beginners they felt had a chance of advancing to lead positions. They therefore hand-picked "strong" employees for us to assess and place in class.

The original assessment tool we used at the start of the grant period consisted of two components: an oral interview and a writing sample. The oral interview consisted of ten questions which attempted to elicit both factual and inference information, and the ability to use different tenses. The interview was scored by checking off whether the interviewee answered at all, answered appropriately or not, and whether the answer was complete and grammatical. Some interviewers also attempted to write down the interviewees' responses, but others did not do so. The inference questions addressed a photograph, and then shifted from the photograph to the students' own life dreams. The photograph was not a picture that had any connection to the lives of the employees; one of the first changes we made in the assessment was to use a picture of an assembly worker. Employees suddenly had much more to say to the interviewer.

The writing component gave employees a choice of two topics to write about, and asked them to write a paragraph. They were also asked (in writing) why they wanted to study English.

At the start of the program, we perceived the assessment test in very narrow terms, considering only the interview and writing components once potential students arrived in the room for testing. Over the course of several months (2-3 cycles), a number of issues arose which caused us to reconsider the initial assessment. These issues included the following:

1. **Multi-level classes.** Since we only tested a few more students than could be placed in classes, we were in the position of filling classes with whoever we tested, regardless of actual level of ability. While trying to keep the classes as homogeneous as possible, we still ended up with a wide range, especially at the lower levels, where we would have literacy and beginner/high beginner students in the same class. Part of the problem was that the test did not accurately reveal skills, particularly at the literacy and beginner levels. Both teachers and students were concerned about the level differences within classes. It is important to emphasize the students' role in prompting us to review the assessment tool; they voiced strong concerns over the mixed level classes and over low motivation of some students. Responding to these concerns involved re-thinking the assessment. The other teacher also played an important role; coming in as an outsider for a short period of time, she was able to pinpoint issues and concerns which I had felt but not yet articulated.
2. **Initial selection process.** We began to question the company's recruitment policy for a couple of reasons. We tried offering more classes (adding two in the fall of 1993), but management found that when we ran four classes, there were too many people off the line. Production could not handle this need in terms of numbers. We also wanted to test many more people than we could serve as a way to resolve the problem of the multi-level classes. However, management opposed this idea because they did not want to raise false expectations by testing employees when they could not serve them; management felt that open testing would result in too many people being tested and too much disappointment. We also felt that supervisors and managers were pre-selecting those employees they felt would further benefit the company through classes, and ignoring other, potentially successful, employees. It seemed that they were selecting those who were bound to do well. They were also pre-selecting based on their

idea of who was 'advanced' and who was 'beginner', but their perceptions did not necessarily match skill levels reflected on an assessment test. Second, and related to the pre-selection process, was confusion and resentment on the part of employees over who was chosen to be in the program; some employees were able to participate more than once while others never even got tested even though they wanted to study.

3. **Curriculum and materials development.** We found that the original initial assessment did not provide instructors with the information they needed for determining what to teach, and at what level. The assessment did not provide students an opportunity to provide input into shaping the curriculum. Nor were instructors sure of the best way to approach the resulting multi-level classes.

As a result of the concerns of instructors and students, and with the intention of improving service to the company and students, during the third cycle of classes we (the instructors and coordinator) began to re-look at the assessment tool and ultimately re-design it. The first concern we needed to address was what the assessment tool was for in the first place: what information we wanted to get from the assessment, what skills we wanted to assess, who we were assessing for, and how that information would be used.

We decided that there were a number of reasons for assessment:

1. determine level of motivation and interest in classes
2. place in appropriate and homogeneous classes
3. establish and standardize proficiency levels
4. measure learner progress over time
5. track program effectiveness (by showing learner progress) *(We have since re-thought this point because learner progress is not the only - and probably not the most important - measure of program effectiveness.)*
6. ascertain and clarify needs and expectations of both participants and teacher.

We saw a need for some mechanism that went beyond a pen and paper test, that would ensure an ability to shape classroom instruction, and that would provide potential participants with enough knowledge to choose whether or not they wanted to take a class. The new assessment tool, intended to address these reasons or issues, consists of five components: an orientation for potential students, an interview, a reading section, a writing section, and a literacy assessment.

The purpose of the *orientation* is to provide information to potential students about the ESL program, what is covered in classes, and what the expectations are for participants, and how people are selected. It offers potential students the opportunity to ask questions and express their expectations, needs, interest, and commitment. This latter point was particularly important to students who were committed. The orientation gives them a chance to choose whether to participate. In retrospect, we see that many people who were chosen by their supervisors may have felt obligated to attend the class, even if they did not want to. This lack of interest and motivation is reflected in lack of completion of the course, poor attendance, and/or poor attitude.

The *interview* was re-designed in two ways. First, we re-did the way responses are scored, to provide more accurate information. Second, we changed some of the questions so that they would provide more useful information regarding abilities and needs. Questions are familiar, in that they ask for personal factual information and about the interviewees own life goals.

Originally, the assessment did not include a *reading component*, but we decided to add one because we felt we needed information on general reading fluency, decoding skills, and reading comprehension. We decided to offer students a wide choice of reading materials, at different levels, and let them choose for themselves which one to read. In this way, they could show us what they found interesting or relevant. We found that students read better when they read something familiar, either in a familiar format (e.g. want ads, work memos), or a familiar topic (e.g. immigrant experiences, work stories). Reading selections included work-related materials, real-life materials, and selections from readers. We rated the readings for level, based on difficulty of the grammar, length of sentences, and vocabulary. Comprehension questions include yes/no, information, and inference questions; we also note students' answers, pronunciation problems, and whether the selection seems too easy or difficult. The idea for organizing a reading component in this way came from an assessment developed at Quinsigamond Community College in Worcester, Mass.

The *writing section* also became more detailed. We found that with the original test, students often did not write because they could not think of anything to say, not because they lacked writing ability. We instruct the student to choose a topic, and if it appears that they are having difficulty, we provide them with a card with specific questions about the topic.

If it appears that the student cannot write at all (or if the students say that they cannot write), we use the *literacy assessment*. This was an important addition to the assessment tool because initially we had no way to evaluate the skills of someone who claimed to be unable to write, and many of the students at C&K are at literacy or very low levels. The literacy assessment provides information on letter and sound identification, numeracy, sight word recognition, and writing of personal information. If the student is able to decode the sight words well, we have them attempt the simplest level one reading selection.

The detailed information which this expanded assessment tool provides enables an instructor to look back at the test and evaluate skill levels. Guidelines for the assessment result in greater consistency in scoring among different testers. In this way, if the teacher is not the same person who gave the test, he or she is still able to compare tests and more accurately group people by level, as well as glean significant information for pre-planning and developing appropriate materials for classroom instruction.

Parts of the revised assessment tool

were piloted for cycle 3 in the spring of 1994; specifically, we had the orientation, and we used the literacy and reading components. The interview and writing components had not been completely revised in time and were not piloted. We found that management was still reluctant to have open testing for all interested employees, but we were able to continue testing until we had filled two classes with fairly homogeneous skill levels. While the revised assessment takes longer, it provides more accurate information.

We found that the orientation clarified goals and expectations so that students were aware of what the program would offer. It brought to our attention what workers wanted the program to offer. Some workers who came to the orientation decided not to take the class. It also raised other issues, such as possibly needing to revise the program to address particular needs, offering specialized courses for students. This issue has not yet been addressed.

The literacy component provided much needed information at the lower levels and enabled us to better place students in classes and use appropriate materials.

At this time, we have neither used the complete test for initial assessment of students, nor have we used it to measure student progress or program effectiveness. We plan to pilot the complete assessment tool and see if it adequately addresses all five of our goals during the next cycle at C&K Components. The original assessment did not address student concerns or provide us with the results and information we wanted and needed. So far, it seems that the revised version makes more sense in terms of assessing abilities and informing instruction. However, we are still left with the apparent contradiction of needing to test sufficient number of workers so as to create homogeneous classes, but not testing so many that we raise expectations of people we cannot serve. Therefore, a question which remains for us is how to find a middle ground that will satisfy all parties.

☑

C&K INITIAL ASSESSMENT

	no response	*inappropriate response*	*rephrased*	*asked for clarification*	*appropriate response*
1. What is your name?					
2. How do you spell it?					
3. Where are you from?					
4. What is your job now?					
5. Did you work in your country?					
6. What job did you have?					
7. When did you come to the U.S.?					
8. How many years have you been working at C&K?					
9. What is your first language?					

C&K INITIAL ASSESSMENT

	no response	inappropriate response	rephrased	asked for clarification	appropriate response
10. Why do you want to learn English?					
11. What do you need English for?					
12. What did you do yesterday?					
13. What do you do everyday?					
14. What will you do this weekend?					
15. Do you speak English at Work? Home?					
with friends? with supervisors?					
16. Did you study English before? Where?					
Additional Comments					

LITERACY ASSESSMENT

Letter Identification (use index cards for letter identification, numeracy and sight words. Mark responses on this sheet)

p b s z j c w h ch sh th qu

t d f v r l y x

m n g k a e i o

Numeracy:

1 5 13 26 151 100 10 1993 2 4327

Sight Words:

Mrs. one two who work you the on has come exit

country danger school live mother women

father people where heard busy men

nobody example trouble cough debt caution

bouquet straight iron Wednesday sure warning

Writing:

Name ____

Address: ____
number street

____
city state zip code

Adapted from literacy assessment by Jon Phillips, International Institute of Boston

Learning from Experience

Elizabeth Santiago

SABES
Central Resource
Center,
World Education

The following is a short description of my experiences as a GED recipient. Through it, I advocate for a non-traditional form of assessment to be used as a way of evaluating my potential or capability as a college student and member of society. I wanted to write about the choices I've made in the hopes that educators, employers, and peers will understand that sometimes no standardized tests can judge a person's ability, and that above all, personal or life experience should be valued.

Early in 1986, I made a decision that changed my life; I stopped going to high school. I have to admit that it wasn't a very tough decision because I thought I was doing the right thing for me. I was the youngest of nine children and the fourth high school dropout. All my brothers and sisters were content with their lives and the jobs they had. Because of this, I believed the key to a happy life was to find a "good" job.

I filled out job applications at every office in town, but had great difficulty getting interviews. My brothers and sisters grew up in a different time, a time when there wasn't much competition for entry level work.

I re-evaluated things. I came to believe that the key to a happy life was a combination of many things held together by education. I decided to get my GED (General Educational Development). I went to Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD) and signed up for classes. I was given a placement test and put in a high level class. Six months after entering the GED program, I took the five tests and passed.

Upon receiving my GED in 1987, I found an entry level job in the business world as a data entry operator. I was grateful for the opportunity to work, learn, and better myself, but was disturbed by the misconceptions of me as a GED recipient. Some people stereotyped me as not being bright or taking the easy way out because they felt the GED tests weren't as challenging as going through traditional high school. Or they had preconceived ideas of how someone who left high school would be. These experiences made me work twice as hard to get taken seriously. I felt I had something to prove because I knew I could do the job.

I was given a promotion to workflow administrator after six months. I wasn't thrilled with the work I was doing, but I didn't have any other skills than what I learned on the job. I wanted and needed more education to get further ahead in my life. Emerson College in Boston offered a good program so I made a trip to the school for an application. When I started to fill out the application, I couldn't complete the section that asked about your high school scores and grades. I wasn't sure what to show the school to prove I was capable of attending. I went back to the admissions office and had a discussion with one of the counselors. I was told that since I didn't have high school transcripts or SAT scores for them to draw a conclusion about my potential they wouldn't accept me to the school. I had to show them that I was able to do college level material.

I ended up taking two courses at Emerson without applying as a student. The thought was that if I did well, I could use these grades as transcripts. I did well in both courses and took two more before officially applying to the school. I also did well in the second set of courses. The following semester I made an appointment to see the same guidance counselor. I brought a portfolio of all of my class assignments from the four classes. We began talking and he looked over my grades from each of my classes. I pulled out my portfolio of papers, tests, projects, even work that I did during the day for him to review and he was impressed. What got me accepted to the school above all was a 40-page draft of a screenplay that I did in a senior level class that was graded A- by a tough professor.

I still attend school part-time in the evenings. It has been five years and I still have a few years left to go before I receive my Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Writing, Literature, and Publishing. No matter, I know I will finish. I have talked to other GED recipients who have said they stopped telling people they are GED graduates because it's easier to say 'I graduated from such and such high school.' I think about this all the time. I always want to tell people that I am a GED recipient. Mainly because I am proud, but partly because I want to help change someone's attitude about what the people who receive GEDs are able to accomplish. I hope by writing my story I can share my belief that the GED is not a guarantee of anything. It is just the foundation you need to keep your options open and your choices broad.

☑

Letter

A Response to Hofer and Larson on links between Literacy Practices & Community Development

Judy Hofer and Pat Larson identified a critical component of literacy work in their article "Reflecting on the links between literacy practices and community development" (AiA, Vol. 5, Fall, 1993). Although many literacy practitioners assume that connections exist between classroom learning and community action, we seldom name these connections explicitly, nor do we always know whether the learners with whom we work share those assumptions. Do we believe that only through living and working within a community do we have the right and the opportunity to work with others in that community towards creating positive social change? Is our task to help adults learn about existing options within their communities, make informed choices and/or create new possibilities? Defining what we mean by community development may be slippery; finding ways to assess its growth is an ongoing challenge.

In North America, our assumptions about growth and learning are informed essentially by 'first world' thinking. This makes sense; contexts in which adult education occurs in Canada are not the same as those occurring in the U.S., Mexico, Central and South America, and elsewhere in the world. Examining the conditions in which community development and education occur in this country, in contrast to developing nations, is part of the larger work of thinking of human learning and development overall. How people come together and/or change lives in their communities is always contextualized and connected to particular conditions.

I wonder, too, how much the agenda for positive social change is generated by literacy workers, and how much community development work hasn't yet occurred because people in communities are unaware of their options. How do prevailing conditions (such as welfare regulations, access to clear and readable information) perpetuate this lack of awareness? In whose interest is information made available or not? Does knowledge equal power, and is community development solely directed at access to power? Does access to literacy necessarily lead to greater access to that power? Power for whom? Gained how? Hofer and Larson list important questions to consider in finding ways to assess "improvement and change as a continuous process", for individuals [and] the community of individuals"; in addition, I still want to know *why* we assume that adult learners might be interested in community and leadership development.

What about those people who are afraid to challenge the status quo because of their own histories as immigrants or refugees? What about those learners who seem or profess to be unaffected by conditions which others would challenge? Do we preach? Do we

Janet Isserlis

Rainmaker Project
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Canada

politicize? In whose interest?

The theme of community itself is one which learners may or may not want to discuss; they may or may not see any importance in examining their notions of community. Writing, drawing, making maps of people's routes to school, shopping routes, streets, social/visiting routes or talking about community may lead to reflection about what happens in communities, good or bad.

As adult literacy learners become more capable readers and writers, do they then become more capable of doing the day to day things they want to do? Do other possibilities become visible, so these learners can choose to become more active participants in the lives of their communities? Will they want to take on issues that may concern them only indirectly? Is it our goal to help people see the links between seemingly unrelated conditions and their own lives?

THE RAINMAKER PROJECT

In responding to Hofer and Larson, I want to briefly describe an intergenerational literacy project currently entering its second year in Vancouver, BC.

The Rainmaker Project was envisioned by Lee Weinstein as a community development effort where literacy would be a means through which intergenerational learning would occur, where people in an inner-city neighborhood would come together to address their own literacy needs, and where adults' and children's language development would be supported. The program was designed to serve the community surrounding Macdonald Elementary School in east Vancouver, as well as to meet the needs of children at the school. The school has a population of approximately 255 children, of whom half are First Nations (native Indian), 40% Asian (Chinese and Vietnamese), 5% Spanish speaking and 5% Canadian-born of Northern European origin. The school contains grades 1 through 7, as well as one ESL class. School staff includes classroom teachers, first nations resource workers, a family advancement worker, two learning assistance center teachers, a project teacher and a child care worker.

A guiding principle in the project's relationship to the community is the notion of breaking down isolation and enabling people to feel connected to their world. A parallel objective is to develop a center and educational processes which could be adapted and eventually owned by community stakeholders.

In the first year, project staff worked to develop opportunities for intergenerational learning — for parents, children and other adults in the school and community. Learner-generated materials were a necessary focus and product of our work. Computers functioned as a primary vehicle enabling staff and learners to create necessary texts, including ongoing documentation/logs of daily classes and events, adults' and children's stories and classwork, as well as documents created by and for others in the school (newsletters, permission forms, announcements, grant applications, invitations).

During its first year, over 240 children and 40 adults worked in the center, a room containing two round tables, chairs, book shelves, reading, writing and drawing materials, eight Macintosh LC computers, and two printers. (The computers and one of the printers were obtained through a grant from Apple (Canada). Children in the school (both mainstream students and children for whom English is an additional language) worked on computers in the project center during regularly scheduled weekly periods (usually 45 minutes).

The center was open to classes in the school five days a week, and maintained drop-in hours for children every day after school, from 3 to 4 p.m. In addition, adults (with or without children) had access to the center from 4-6 p.m. Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, from 4-8 p.m. on Wednesdays, and from 2 to 4 p.m. on Fridays. Children came to the center after school to do homework as well as to draw, write, play games and/or to spend time with peers and staff.

We utilized the computer as a tool which can help children and adults express ideas, draw pictures, write, revise, edit. We used standard word processing and drawing programs rather than (with few exceptions) educational software. Children began by using drawing programs to acclimate themselves to using the mouse and becoming comfortable with the computers. Through using the technology, children particularly in ESL and kindergarten classes — who were reticent to speak in their regular classes became quite engaged in what they were doing, and spoke to others to share their findings, and/or to ask how to do more or different things.

Parents who were studying English as an additional language in the room every morning were quite interested in seeing their children use the computers, although most preferred to stay at the conversation table. The adults who studied in the morning (from 9 to 11:30) were mothers of children in the school, and had little previous involvement with the school. Most of these mothers would not have sought out more 'traditional' ESL classes at other sites (community colleges, adult learning centers) but were drawn to our center because of its location at their children's school. As well, child care was provided on-site and there were no fees involved for either classes or child minding.

In addition to parents participating in English language classes during the mornings, other Canadian-born, English-speaking parents used the computers on a drop-in basis to write letters, poems, resumes, and songs, and also to do work for other teachers in the school. As the center became better known to people in the community, there was a steady increase in its use, and adults were increasingly comfortable coming to either watch their children and/or to work alongside them learning to type, exploring software options, writing themselves.

During its first year, the center was an active place. Part of our purpose is to enable community people to increasingly define the goals of the program. Ultimately, our mandate is to have the project, should it continue to be funded, run entirely by people of the community itself. This process will take some time and involves ongoing support from the team and the school. As of this writing, it is likely that some form of the project will continue within the school, and other funding has been secured to start a similar project within another nearby elementary school.

INDICATORS OF EFFECTIVENESS

A learning center which allows participants to identify their own needs, to seek assistance when and as needed, and which provides both staff and equipment as resources is an asset to a community. When that learning center can open its doors to the community at large, it has a real opportunity to facilitate learning, literacy and community development. We have seen the increase of participation in the program, both among children and adults at the center. We now need to demonstrate the program's effectiveness and to evaluate this progress in ways that meet funders' requirements while also remaining consistent with our program philosophy.

In terms of the kinds of evaluative questions literacy workers may ask are the following: Does helping Gwen write her many letters constitute community development? Does Lawrence's phone list? What about the Christmas cards generated by him and his family? What about kids' exposure to the possibilities of technology? We seem to agree that we don't want tightly sequenced computer programs. We do see some kids writing for their own authentic purposes — S's note to her substitute teacher, A's letters to her mom. Many kids, though, still resist writing, and now that the novelty of the technology has worn off, we are faced with dilemmas similar to those faced by classroom teachers. How do we argue compellingly for kids to write? Is it through reading to them? Showing them possibilities? Asking them to take their work seriously and to read to one another? Are they inspired by seeing adults who are not teachers use the technology for their own purposes? In some ways we are very limited by the fact that we do not work in classrooms, and are seen as a support to classroom activity (and in some cases a diversion from it). As we continue to slowly and carefully build connections to teachers and students at the school, we may be able to bridge some of that distance. We must move carefully and slowly; this process of building trust is essential to the work we hope to do.

One way of viewing assessment, raditionally, has been to see whether those goals have been met. Who sets these goals? for whom? who measures growth? how? As the literature on alternative assessment continues to expand, and as alternative assessment itself becomes its own norm among adult literacy practitioners, new questions about links between classroom work and community action are being raised. Does participating in a literacy center where one can write letters to social service and housing agencies, to newspaper editors and policymakers constitute a part of community development per se? Does the awareness that these letters can be written constitute a change in behavior? Does this writing work to break down isolation in some tangible way?

A PERSONAL VIEW

I don't live in the community in which I work. I'm a middle class white woman working among women, men and children from Canada, Asia and South America in an inner city neighborhood. How do I deal with the conflict I feel between wanting Asian women to learn about First Nations' concerns and events? Who am I to say that helping Asian and First Nations parents come together is a desirable goal? What concerns are shared by those ethnic communities within their geographic community? Can collective action around such concerns as safety, security, heavy traffic on streets near the school, and drug use bring people together? Does problem posing work within the conversation group facilitate the development of collective action? Can literacy work around neighborhood flyers and newspapers help to increase consciousness about both problems and opportunities for change within the community?

Questions about learning and community development seem inevitably linked to questions about our own roles as residents, no-residents of commuities, towns, cities, countries. Thinking about returning to Vancouver, I realize again why I went there to work two years ago. The political agenda among many of my colleagues is far more explicit and articulated than was my own two years ago when I first arrived in BC. As I struggle to name important processes, even within this writing, I realize that I need to learn more. Much of the work done by adult educators in the US and Canada is funded by sources for whom the agenda is clearly economic. Adult learners are being trained into jobs they may not want to do, or worse, still, into jobs which may not exist. Practitioners in either country must be able to articulate why the political agendas which underpin funding may be racist or discriminatory and to help other adults be able to articulate these problems, too. Many adults in communities are already quite capable of naming these problems, but may feel they lack access to those people (policymakers, politicians) through whom change might be enacted.

Programs which allow adults and children to work together seem to facilitate positive growth in communities. Programs which offer the potential for community people to run the centers in which they began as learners enable positive growth to move one step further. Finding ways to articulate what that growth is and how it helps people and communities over time seems the logical next step in the course of plotting assessment that truly tells us and the learners with whom we work where we're going — by helping people look at where they've been and at where they decide they need to go. As I struggle to complete even this essay, I realize I've raised far more questions than I can or should hope to answer at this moment.

Author's note: The Rainmaker Project team has included Lee Weinstein, Louié Ettling, Rani Gill, Manabu Seki, Anne McDonald, Dwayne MacKenzie, and Nancy Goldhar. Pieces of this writing have been adapted by other writing Lee Weinstein and I have done about the project.

☑

ESL Assessment Conundrum

Bring us a test that is normed,
Not to mention perfectly formed,
Fit for advanced beginners,
Lets all learners be winners.

Spits out numerical score
That provides funders with lore,
Hard data to track,
Offers legislators feedback.

Standardization might do,
Troy'd talk to Kalamazoo,
Transition starts to make sense,
And teachers wouldn't feel tense

When asked to document progress
For *more* accountability not less,
They know students are advancing,
But have trouble substancing

What they observe everyday,
From "repeat" to role play,
Gains in confidence, each try,
That's good enough! Why ask why?

Assessment alternatives ripe to explore
Will skills transfer beyond the classroom door?
Placement, process, progress and change,
How to shape our stories for the validity range?

— **Diane Pecoraro**
Minnesota Department of Education
TESOL '94

Book Review

Dimensions of Change

Dimensions of Change:
An Authentic Assessment Guidebook
Melody Schneider and Mallory Clarke
1993 ABLE (Adult Basic and Literacy Educators); Available from: ABLE, 1701 Broadway, Seattle, Washington (206) 587-3880

The new ABLE publication, *Dimensions of Change: An Authentic Assessment Guidebook*, has much to recommend it. As the final documentation of a special project entitled "Integrated Assessment: Being Accountable to Teachers and Students," there's an integrity and authenticity to this resource. Reading *Dimensions of Change* made me nostalgic for the days when Massachusetts had discretionary federal "353" funds that went out to practitioners, which is how Melody Schneider and Mallory Clarke got money to do such in-depth work.* Though the authors never specify who they mean by the "diverse adult education programs" — 14 teachers and 70 students in Washington State — they worked with, it appears that the guidebook is intended for ABE, not ESL programs, since oral language assessment *per se* is excluded from the contents. However, a great deal of the book—from theory to practice—can certainly be adapted to ESL literacy.

As a "guidebook," the text fits into the genre of teacher resources I like best. It combines theory and practice; it pays attention to process and product; it invites flexible use; it tells stories to illustrate things; it has lots of white space, and it has a spiral binding that allows you to lay it flat on the copy machine to reproduce the clearly-formatted plethora of usable "tools" at the end. As such, *Dimensions of Change* can serve as an excellent staff development guide for programs interested in re-examining their current assessment practices and trying out some new things. I liked, too, that the authors chose to define their focus as "authentic assessment" rather than "alternative assessment", a term that has become less useful as "alternative" approaches enter more mainstream practices. They define authentic as "teachers and students working together to find multiple ways to understand their progress and problems in attaining educational goals."

Two main tenets drive the work: participatory education and whole language practice. The authors are clear and straightforward in the presentation of their view of literacy; this is not an "anything goes" compilation of assessment protocols. Chapter 1, *What is authentic assessment*, establishes principles of authentic assessment and elaborates on each of them. Again, there is nothing new here, but it's nicely presented, and consistent with current thinking in the field of literacy studies. They remind us that authentic assessment is learner centered. It's an inte-

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grated part of teaching and learning. It reflects the complexity of learning; it guides teachers in daily instruction. It involves real, purposeful activities. And it uses a variety of methods. It's refreshing that they locate their focus clearly on teachers and learners and do not attempt to muddy the process by dealing with the demands of funders and other stakeholders. That dialogue is a separate one, with different issues and challenges. This resource focuses on the teaching / learning process.(I was surprised, though, that Susan Lytle's work wasn't cited in this chapter, since she was an important forerunner of much of this content, and influenced many people currently doing assessment in adult ed.

Chapter 1 reminds me again of the importance of starting with an understanding of what we mean by literacy—and by extension, how we should be teaching reading and writing—before we jump into adopting the newest assessment approaches. Unless teachers clarify the theoretical base of whole language and the political and practical considerations of participatory education, the niftiest handouts in the world aren't going to be very useful.

The authors validate teachers' experiences by reminding them that "you already do authentic assessment," a perspective I have been sharing with teachers in my staff development work over the last several years. They note that "authentic assessment provides a way for teachers who are assessing internally to document their observations and analyses, making them usable." This is a pivotal issue in the area of assessment. It's not that teachers aren't *doing* the assessment, it's that they are not *documenting* it in ways that help them, and others, see how students are progressing. Even though teachers are the best suited to make evaluations of students' progress, their analyses are often dismissed by funders and by teachers themselves as "too subjective," and thus not valid. By analyzing and documenting their observations by using a common language and agreed upon criteria, teachers can indeed present valid assessments of students' work to themselves (for planning and instructing), to students (to see their own progress and set goals) and to other stakeholders in literacy programs. In the long run, such systematic documentation might better persuade funders to accept approaches like portfolios instead of ineffectual standardized tests. But that's another story...

With refreshing candor, the authors share their own "adventures in assessment" in Chapter 2. Here, we get to see some of the stuff that didn't work and what they learned from it. This realistic glimpse into process is another example of how the book is linked to real classrooms.

If programs are interested in going through a process of their own in order to develop better assessment practices, Chapter 3 will be especially valuable. Specific tasks guide the reader through a process in developing an authentic assessment system. Two things stood out for me in this section. First, the authors realize that student participation takes some time to cultivate, encourage, and promote. Second, they recognize that a project like this demands time and money and suggest ways to fund it.

One program's path through the

process of developing authentic assessment is illustrated in Chapter 4. This case study makes things really concrete, and includes teachers' journal excerpts, transcriptions of discussions, and reflection pieces. Teachers will recognize questions and concerns that mirror their own. For example, a discussion about the use of checklists:

Ellen: I like the class to move more organically and I'm concerned about the time it takes to do assessment

Shash: It takes several minutes to fill out the lists and I'd rather use the time elsewhere. I have to learn how to get people into it. .....

Ellen: We haven't set up things to make the self assessment work. We have to do it regularly. Students need to be able to be really reflective.

Finally, the appendix. This satisfyingly thick section of tools is organized well —first by categories of tools and then cross-referenced by placement in the class cycle (beginning, on-going, final). There are short explanations and commentaries about the different categories of tools, too. I've seen many of these protocols in similar formats floating around in a variety of sources, but it's nice to have them compiled in an organized format.

An annotated list of articles and books that the authors used when researching their project is located at the end of the guidebook. The authors claim: "We offer short comments from our personal perspective as readers and teachers. We make no claims that you will agree with us. That's the way it goes with reading."

Those sympathetic to reader-response theory (myself included) will agree. But I was bothered by the unnecessarily glib and dismissive manner in which some of the resources were treated. It seemed uncharacteristic of the rest of the book that extended respect to teachers struggling with this new process of authentic assessment. It felt like I was reading over the shoulder of the authors as they wrote to each other here without a wider audience considered. Future editions of the text might warrant a rethinking of this section.

** Note: "353" money, federal adult education funding earmarked for staff development and special projects, has been pooled in Massachusetts to fund the SABES system as a whole. SABES does, of course, offer mini-grants for special projects. Schneider and Clarke were able to get a grant of $20,000 to fund their work. I think it's important to note that work of this nature does require substantial funding.*

☑

adventures in ASSESSMENT

Learner-centered
approaches
to assessment &
evaluation
in adult literacy

volume [illegible]

winter 1995

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SABES
System for Adult Basic Education Support

SABES is the System for Adult Basic Education Support, a comprehensive training and technical assistance initiative for adult literacy educators and programs. Its goal is to strengthen and enhance literacy services and thus to enable adult learners to attain literacy skills.

SABES accomplishes this goal through staff and program development workshops, consultation, mini-courses, mentoring and peer coaching, and other training activities provided by five Regional Support Centers located at community colleges throughout Massachusetts. SABES also offers a 15-hour Orientation that introduces new staff to adult education theory and practice and enables them to build support networks.

SABES also maintains an adult literacy Clearinghouse to collect, evaluate, and disseminate ABE materials, curricula, methodologies, and program models, and encourages the development and use of practitioner and learner-generated materials. Each of the five SABES Regional Support Centers similarly offers program support and a lending library. SABES maintains an Adult Literacy Hotline, a statewide referral service whch responds to calls from new learners and volunteers. The Hotline number is 1-800-447-8844.

☑

The SABES Central Resource Center, a program of World Education, publishes a statewide quarterly newsletter, "Bright Ideas," and journals on topics of interest to adult literacy professionals, such as this volume of "Adventures in Assessment."

The first three volumes of "Adventures in Assessment" present a comprehensive view of the state of practice in Massachusetts through articles written by adult literacy practitioners. Volume 1, ***Getting Started****, includes start-up and intake activities; Volume 2,* ***Ongoing****, shares tools for ongoing assessment as part of the learning process; Volume 3,* ***Looking Back, Starting Again****, focuses on tools and procedures used at the end of a cycle or term, including self, class, and group evaluation by both teachers and learners. Volume 4 covered a range of interests, and Volume 5,* ***The Tale of the Tools*** *is dedicated to reflecting on Component 3 tools of alternative assessment. Volume 6,* ***Responding to the Dream Conference****, is dedicated to responses to Volumes 1-5. Volume 7,* ***The Partnership Project****, highlighted writings from a mentoring project for practioners interested in learning about participatory assessment. This issue covers a range of topics from education reform to learner involvement in assessment. Volume 9 and future issues will be dedicated to specific topics or a range of interests.*

We'd like to see your contribution, especially if you are doing native language lit or low-level ESOL lit. Contact Editor Alison Simmons to discuss your submission.

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adventures in ASSESSMENT

Learner-centered approaches to assessment & evaluation in adult literacy

Volume 8

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Introduction

Meeting the Challenge of Authentic Assessment

by
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One of the greatest challenges still facing adult educators today is the question of learner assessment. How will I measure the progress of my learners so it is meaningful to them, informs instruction and the curriculum, and satisfies the funders?

In the past seven volumes of *Adventures in Assessment*, we have heard from a variety of practitioners sharing their ideas, successes and attempts at exploring and developing learner-centered approaches to assessment and evaluation. As contributors struggled with the question of what "a learner-centered approach to assessment and evaluation" meant, they offered us a different way to assess and test our learners, and helped us think beyond the confines of standardized, commercial instruments.

In the age of education reform, unstable funding, measurable outcomes, and program accountability, we who believe in authentic assessment feel a need to defend our ways of measuring learner progress and program effectiveness to the powers that make decisions about the future of the field. We also want to "lift the burden of accountability off the backs of learners and place it on programs and funders" (Whiton, *Bright Ideas*, Vol. 5, #1, Summer '95). Within these challenges we hope to find ways to showcase the work that has already been done in authentic/alternative assessment and not return to the age of assessment that gave us the numbers and positive outcomes but told us little of program effectiveness or the personal gains our learners made as parents, citizens, and workers.

In Volume 8 of *Adventures in Assessment* (AiA), **Johan Uvin** revisits his earlier article (AiA, Volume 1) and talks about the role of authentic assessment in workplace education programs in light of education reform. Uvin states "Education reform is here to stay, at least for the foreseeable future, and will have an impact on workplace education, including but not limited to learner assessment."

While Uvin gives us the education reform perspective, **Lisa Levinson** talks about a statewide perspective on systemic change. In 1991, Maine decided that portfolio assessment was to replace standardized testing in Adult Education Programs. (Sandy Brawders introduced us to Maine's portfolio in AiA, Vol 6.)

Levinson, from the Horizon Project in Maine, takes us on a chronological journey through Maine's process of developing and implementing their State Indicators of Program Quality. She looks back over the past three years and documents the events that have led to the implementation and development of the Indicators and portfolio assessment as an integral part of Maine's adult education system.

In the next article, **Yvonne La Lyre** looks at the broad question of Native Language Literacy (NLL) instruction and assessment through a review of the literature. As Native Language Literacy increasingly becomes a part of the ABE system, it impacts how and why we assess people for literacy in their native language. At the end of her article, Yvonne looks at how programs around the country are assessing their NLL learners and what resources are available for assessment and instruction. She challenges us think about how these findings impact our ESOL literacy classes and our need to assess learner progress.

Two authors address the question often raised by adult educators: "How can we get learners more involved in the assessment process?" **Molly Paul Nguyen** and **Michele Verni** explore different ways to look at involving learners in the dialogue about what assessment is and what the purposes should be.

Nguyen took the question of assessment and testing into the classroom as a lesson plan to start a discussion about assessment in the lives of her learners. This discussion prompted her to alter her assessment practices and to start thinking about other ways to involve learners in the assessment process.

Michele Verni was involved in a statewide survey of adult learners that asked how adult education programs affected their lives. She talks about her experience being part of that process and leads us to question what an "adult learner" perspective is.

Two teachers from very different programs tackle the issue of creating a common assessment tool to measure learner progress for teachers working for the same program but at different sites or different levels. **Jenny Utech** talks about the challenge teachers in her program had coming up with a tool that could satisfy both ABE and ESOL classes. Jenny raises the question of whether there is a pre- and post-assessment tool or process that could satisfy the needs of both ABE and ESOL learners and teachers in the same program at the same time with not only varying goals, but also varying needs in terms of language acquisition and learning.

Linda Gosselin *et al* tackled the same issue in their program. The Quinsigamond program's need to streamline its assessment was motivated by transferring students from one class to another. There was no systematic way of doing this previously, so assessment on an ongoing basis and at the end of the term was not meaningful. She and her colleagues were looking for a tool flexible enough to meet the individual needs of the teachers but common enough to meet program and funding requirements.

Two authors take us into their programs and give us a glimpse of how authentic assessment is implemented. **Caroline Gear** discusses the need for teachers as well as learners to have developmental time for integrating authentic assessment in their classes and what support teachers need to make this happen. We have all experienced the initial reluctance of learners who are new to authentic assessment. It takes time for learners and teachers to find ways to make the process participatory and meaningful. The same time is needed for programs to work with staff who are new to authentic assessment. Caroline looks at one authentic assessment tool and talks about how this can be a beginning framework for teachers and programs new to authentic assessment.

Marti Duncan takes us quite literally on a tour of her adult education center in rural Maine where she shows us portfolio assessment is alive and well. Through several interviews we see that portfolio assessment is systemwide and can be used to measure more that just learner progress. We should look at it as a process that everyone in a program can participate in for their own assessment purposes.

In *What Counts?* **Paula Carranza** *et al* write about math activities that can be used as an assessment tool. The authors walk us through a few activities that they have found useful.

We reviewed two books in this volume. **Sylvie O'Donell** looked at *Assessing Success in Family Literacy Programs,* a book that looks at designing and implementing family literacy programs. Eileen Barry reviewed *Whole Language for Adults: Guide to Instruction, Portfolio Assessment, Initial Assessment and Administration and Staff Development.* This is a comprehensive resource for programs and has in-depth sections on initial assessment tools and a guide for the use of portfolio assessment in adult education programs.

There are a lot of ideas here — both broad and narrow — that will hopefully spark interest in others to write about their authentic assessment ideas and tools. AiA has always been one of the places where the dialogue of authentic/alternative assessment takes place. We invite you within Massachusetts and afar to share your ideas, successes, and questions as we learn from each other about authentic assessment.

☑ Alison Simmons

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In light of education reform

Revisiting Assessment in Workplace Education

by
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In Volume One of Adventures in Assessment, I wrote about evaluation for workplace education programs. At that time I was working as a Workplace ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages) teacher in the workplace education program at the South Cove Manor Nursing Home in Boston's Chinatown. The article documented my efforts to demonstrate the effectiveness of the program by developing an evaluation plan that involved all stakeholders actively, with learner assessment as an integral but challenging part of that work.

The 1991 article identified the demands for accountability articulated by supervisors, managers, and funders as one of many challenges. I maintained that a collaborative approach to planning and evaluation has the potential to strike a balance between what learners and teachers demand as evidence of progress and the demands expressed by individuals who are not directly engaged in the teaching and learning process.

In this article I revisit the assessment of learners in workplace education. Two developments make revisiting the issue timely: recent changes in the national policy landscape and efforts to systemically reform education at the state level. The key question I am concerned with in this article relates to the impact these developments may have on how workplace education teachers approach the assessment of learners. Most of the article is devoted to discussing the challenges these developments create for teachers.

At first sight these challenges appear to add more pressures to teachers. I conclude, however, that the opportunities education reform efforts provide can enable teachers to 1) further strengthen the use of program-based authentic assessment where assessment is closely tied to the classroom instruction and 2) separate authentic program-based assessment from statewide assessment for accountability purposes.

Workplace Education Is Changing

In all aspects of society, the demand for accountability is increasing. "It is time to deliver," has become a standard phrase in legislative debates and the media. Positive outcomes and deliverables are the key factors in deciding whether services will continue to receive support. Government is reduced. Health, education and human services programs are rescinded, if not eliminated, in an apparently unstoppable urge to make the nation's ends meet. Reform is introduced to radically change systems, consolidate programs and reinvent government to increase effectiveness of the services left. Few stones remain unturned and workplace education is not one of them.

Workplace education is changing. Governmental support (e.g. in the form

A long-term plan for assessment in adult basic education will be developed to assess the feasibility of the 10th grade assessment and to explore program-based portfolio assessment.

of categorical funds) for workplace education is under threat. Rescissions of workplace education funds will result in the elimination of the largest (federal) program that supports workplace education in Massachusetts, the National Workplace Literacy Program, in November 1997.

A similar scenario is unfolding for discretionary resources for workplace education currently available under the Job Training Partnership Act (8% JTPA). The Massachusetts Labor Shortage Initiative that supported workplace education and training of staff in acute care hospitals has been phased out.

Block grant legislation is expected to consolidate some of these discretionary funding sources but does not earmark portions of block grants for workplace education. As a result, workplace education must make a strong case to get some of these block grant funds. The private sector — both business and labor — will experience pressure to step up to the plate to increase its investment in workplace education. Assuming the private sector will somewhat expand its responsibility for supporting programs, demands for accountability may shift. Teachers may find themselves increasingly working for businesses instead of education agencies and will witness first-hand how old public funder demands for accountability are disappearing and are replaced by demands defined by private funders who to varying degrees may value other learning gains than those connected directly and exclusively to the productivity of the organization.

National and state education reform efforts (e.g. Goals 2000: Educate America Act and the Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993) bring about an additional wave of systemic change that will touch learners and teachers in workplace education programs. High expectations for students, teachers, counselors, administrators, and schools (including adult learning centers) are introduced to ensure that all residents of this nation are well-prepared for their present and the future, and increasingly demanding roles as parents, workers and citizens.

The Massachusetts Common Core of Learning captures the essence of the educational foundation children and adults are expected to have acquired at the end of high school or its adult secondary education equivalent. Curriculum frameworks have been developed for K-12, and the development of supplemental adult basic education curriculum frameworks has begun.

Based on the content standards embedded in the frameworks, a two-pronged assessment system is being developed. These prongs consist of a statewide standardized but "performance-based" assessment at the 4th, 8th and 10th grade levels for statewide accountability purposes, and a local school-based component of portfolio assessment. (A long-term plan for assessment in adult basic education will be developed to assess the feasibility of the 10th grade assessment and to explore program-based portfolio assessment.)

The Adult Education Committee established by the Education Reform Act of 1993 (Sections 29 and 75) has defined the level of need/demand for and supply of adult basic education services in the Commonwealth. It has prepared recommendations for the administration and the Legislature for the key elements and funding levels of a coordinated adult basic education service delivery system. Industry skills standards are being developed and used in the implementation of School to Work initiatives and in local workplace education curriculum development efforts.

This list reflects only a part of the reform initiatives that are underway but demonstrates clearly that education reform is comprehensive. For workplace education teachers, education reform begs the questions: What does it all mean ? Should we pay attention to these additional directions we feel pulled into or should we continue doing what we have been doing for years and hope education reform will go away ? Is there a role for us in "making this change" and bringing it to life in our classrooms, in the way we teach and assess learners?

Challenges and Opportunities

Education reform is here to stay at least for the foreseeable future, and will have an impact on workplace education including, but not limited to, learner assessment. Education reform for adult basic education including workplace education, however, will take time and its ultimate success will depend on the outcomes of the changes that teachers have brought about in their classrooms. Their ability to reconcile the skills, needs, interests and goals of adult learners, the needs of their employers and unions and the high expectations established in the Common Core of Learning and fleshed out in the curriculum frameworks will be critical.

Workplace education teachers will not have to do away with the way they teach, develop curricula or assess learners. On the contrary, their teaching methodology, their success stories, their skills in developing highly-customized and contextualized curricula and materials, and their ability to design and implement performance-based assessments provide an outstanding starting point for reviewing the adult basic education supplemental curriculum frameworks from the perspective of the adult worker and his/her employer and union. Once developed, the frameworks will provide all who have an interest in providing workplace education services — both in the private and public sectors — with content standards and guidelines for developing local curricula that use the actual contexts of the workplace and the experiences of workers to teach the skills implied in the high expectations of the Common Core.

Assessment of learners in workplace education has always been challenging. An important reason is that no standardized tests are available that measure the learning gains at which workplace education programs aim. This has challenged and enabled workplace education programs to demonstrate accountability towards their goals that goes beyond the standardized tests. Current standardized tests fail to capture the specific goals of programs and instruction which in most instances are driven by the needs of the local workplace (i.e. employer and employee). Standardized assessments also assume that there is an agreement on content standards across programs. To date, that consensus has been lacking.

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Assessment of learners in workplace education has always been challenging. An important reason is that no standardized tests are available that measure the learning gains at which workplace education programs aim.

As a result, workplace education teachers have developed alternative ways of assessing the impact of instruction on student learning. While reliability and validity have been concerns in these efforts, teachers have been able in a considerable number of cases to generate reliable information on the impact of instruction using performance-driven instruments where learners in real work situations demonstrate gains by applying what they have learned. The use of classroom-based job simulations, or the analyses of video recordings of learners at different points in time using English in work-related interactions are just two examples of authentic assessment instruments teachers have developed and used successfully.

Education reform does not take away the challenge of developing appropriate assessment instruments but provides promising ways of looking at assessment from both a program and system accountability point of view. Once adult basic education supplemental frameworks are available, there will be agreement on content standards that then gets reflected in local or industry-based curricula, instruction and assessment. Assuming that the 10th grade statewide standardized assessment is designed so that it is developmentally and culturally-appropriate for use with adult learners, this performance-based assessment could then be used for statewide accountability purposes.

The content standards embedded in the adult basic education supplemental curriculum frameworks, however, may not all be addressed in local or industry-based curricula. Neither must they be. The program goals and design (e.g. duration of instruction) will define which standards are addressed. The use of a program-based portfolio assessment approach creates opportunities for learners to self-select writings, readings, project reports, video and audio recordings, courses taken, test results and other assessments taken for inclusion in their portfolio. Reviews of portfolios by learners and teachers at several points in time would then reveal which specific learning goals were achieved through instruction and how students are progressing over time towards acquiring the high expectations the Commonwealth has for all students.

Conclusion

Revisiting assessment in workplace education in light of education reform has enabled me to articulate a possible but broadly-defined way that workplace education teachers can connect meaningfully with and substantially inform education reform through participation in the development of adult basic education supplemental frameworks. These frameworks can then be used by workplace education teachers to develop local or industry-specific curricula and program-based authentic assessments based on the specific needs of adult workers and their workplaces.

During the Winter of 1995 and the Spring of 1996, 16 study groups in Massachusetts will begin developing supplemental adult basic education frameworks. Between January and June of 1996, additional specialty groups will provide input from the perspective of the population they are serving. One of these specialty groups will be for workplace education. It will minimally consist of teachers currently involved in the curriculum working group of the Massachusetts Workplace Literacy Consortium. They will review curriculum frameworks from the perspective of the adult worker.

For further information, please contact Adult and Community Learning Services at the Department of Education at (617) 388-3300 at extension 349.

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Maine's History of Systemic Change

by
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The beginning:

In 1991, Congress passed the National Literacy Act. Although there was notice of its enactment at the time, there was not much that changed in Maine's Adult Education system. It is only now, looking back, that we realize the National Literacy Act was a mandate for change in our state.

Two of the provisions contained in the National Literacy Act were the formation of a gubernatorially-appointed state literacy resource center and a field-generated plan of Indicators of Program Quality. State literacy resource centers would be funded by the Act, and states were given until June, 1993 to produce Indicators of Program Quality (what we call our Quality Indicators).

In November, 1992, Sandy Brawders became a staff development specialist at the Staff Development Project housed at the University of Maine. She had been working in Massachusetts as a consultant to that state's Department of Education and had been responsible for its Quality Indicator process. She asked about our Quality Indicators, and where we were in developing them. Sandy was then asked to spearhead Maine's Quality Indicator process. The rest, as they say, is history!

Sandy Brawders trained eight field representatives as facilitators for small groups and invited teachers, tutors, directors, counselors as well as other agency representatives to attend a March 30 Quality Indicator meeting. Needless to say, March in Maine is not the best time to be assured of good weather. In spite of a raging snow/ice storm, 75 people from all over the state attended our first Quality Indicator meeting. At this momentous meeting, it was decided that Maine would abolish grade-level labeling, use portfolio assessment to replace the reliance on standardized testing, and utilize three levels of learning for placing students. The three levels were based on the intensity of service an adult learner would need to progress to the next level. *Intensity Level 1* learners needed the most intensive service because they had the most to learn and accomplish. *Intensity Level 3* learners needed less intensive service because they had more independent learning skills. Fourteen Indicators of Program Quality were generated at this meeting.

A few weeks later, a work group that included the meeting facilitators met in a hotel room of the Howard Johnson's in Waterville to synthesize the data from the March 30th meeting into a coherent document. It became clear that there were consistent themes intersecting all 14 of the Indicators that had been generated. The work group collapsed and nested the 14 Indicators into four, but retained the information of all 14. The resulting Indicators are: **Indicator 1, Learner Expectations; Indicator 2, Program Planning; Indicator 3, Field Organization Responsibilities; Indicator 4, State Responsibilities.**

The draft document with the four Indicators went out to the field for comment through 17 public hearings across the state that were attended by adult learners, teachers, tutors, administrators and other agency partners. The draft was revised, sent out for comment again, and submitted to the United States Department of Education on June 30, 1993. Maine's Quality Indicator document was the only document approved by the USDOE without revision, and has served as a model of inclusionary visioning for other states.

Our Quality Indicator document formed two important groups. The Council for Systems Development (CSD), an interagency group that was designed to oversee the implementation of the Quality Indicators across agencies. It has been meeting since June, 1993 on a bi-monthly basis. The CSD has solidified the connections between Adult Education, ASPIRE and the Bureau of Employment and Training. This group has coordinated joint ventures of collaboration and continues to do so.

The ABE Liaison Committee was also born of the Quality Indicators. Its function is to help the Maine Division of Adult and Community Education revise the Request for Proposals (RFP) process for Adult Basic Education to reflect the Quality Indicators. This committee helped revise the RFP process in 1994, and completely rewrote the RFP in 1995.

Implementation:

In Summer, 1993 the Adult Education Academy was held at Sunday River in Newry, Maine. Traditionally an Adult Education directors meeting, it was opened up to include teachers and tutors. At the Summer Academy, the field generated the ethical framework we all would use in order to begin developing contextualized portfolio assessment throughout our state. The *Golden Rules* of portfolio enabled us to begin the inquiry process into portfolio assessment that was grounded in the same understanding. The first rule of our *Golden Rules* is that the learner owns their portfolio. This has become a very important tenet in our state.

The first rule of our Golden Rules is that the learner owns their portfolio. This has become a very important tenet in our state.

The 1993 Summer Academy was also the site of the initial planning of the New England Literacy Resource Center (NELRC). The New England states had decided that it would be in the best interests of all six states to pool some of each state's literacy resource center money (based on a proportional formula) to create the NELRC. This agreement by all six states' governors was approved by the United States Department of Education in Spring, 1993. It was decided that all six states would get together to work on developing state needs assessments in October.

At the October meeting, Maine traveled to Sturbridge, MA with a van load of ten Adult Educators to develop a framework for conducting the needs assessment for a Resource Center in each state. Maine chose to hold regional focus groups as well as to devise, disseminate and collect a survey. The regional focus groups were comprised of learners, practitioners, tutors, administrators and other agency caseworkers, trainers and teachers. The survey went to teachers, directors and learners across the state. The resulting document, *Yes, We Can!* articulated the vision of what adult education should be in Maine.

Our Quality Indicator document has many x's where resources and training were necessary to create Indicators of Quality. Additional resources were needed to be able to fill in the x's. The Staff Development Project was deluged with requests for portfolio development workshops. Sandy Brawders produced the *Why Portfolio* document that included the "Golden Rules," resources, and suggested starting points. In a concerted effort to keep up with the demand, Sandy Brawders trained ten members of the field to help. Out of that training, another foundation document was created: *The Educational Autobiography*. This document showed the connection of portfolio to all four Indicators, and how the learner was the center of it all.

The Horizon Project

In August, 1993 our state literacy resource center (the staff development project) applied for, and in October received, a two-year discretionary grant from the National Institute for Literacy to build statewide capacity for an interagency staff development system. This was another attempt to provide resources to fill in those x's. The Horizon Project became a reality.

The Horizon Project piloted a regional approach to staff development by creating seven regions in the state. Each region had a trainer, or Horizon Catalyst, who provided support for regional alliance development and staff development opportunities around the four areas of the grant: portfolio assessment, evaluation, reporting and teacher research or inquiry. These four areas were the key elements that intersected all four Quality Indicators. The Horizon Project was an inquiry project itself, with the Catalysts developing their skills with the field. Their motto was to be the 'guide at the side,' not the 'sage on stage.' Portfolio assessment became a major focus of the grant, and the regional model helped build interagency connections and helped start and sustain the portfolio inquiry process.

Other Initiatives

At the same time, the state received a three-year correctional education grant to develop lifeskills curricula at seven county jails in Maine. The Esteem Machine would develop a life skills curriculum that modeled integrating academic and life skills using portfolio assessment. The curriculum modules would be based on the most common reasons for incarceration. The Esteem Machine has been developing curriculum with inmates using an inquiry method ever since. They have taken not only correctional education to new heights but have shown the rest of the field what can happen when learners are partners in curriculum development. This grant also fills in some of the X's in the Quality Indicator document.

The State Literacy Resource Center became known as the Center for Adult Learning and Literacy (CALL) in February of 1994. CALL began publishing a monthly newspaper called the Adult Education Newsletter that quickly became the main connection to what was happening in adult education on the national, state and local levels. It contained articles from the field, from learners and from other agencies. After a 'name the newspaper' contest, and as an

April Fool's joke, the *Maine Fertilizer* debuted in April. Its name caused quite a controversy, but no one forgot it! It continues to be a forum for discussion, a showcase for local programs and a resource for national news and programs. Special inserts have highlighted other agencies, Horizon, Esteem Machine and NELRC work. The *Fertilizer* currently has a circulation of over 6,000 readers. For the first time, teachers, learners as well as directors in the adult education system and other agencies were receiving consistent news about adult education.

Next Steps

The Quality Indicator document required that the field meet every year to assess the process of implementing the Indicators and to plan for the next steps. In March, 1994, the Next Step meeting produced a document that outlined what still needed to be done to help the field realize the Indicators. At this meeting, learners were included for the first time and began to form a statewide learner group. This group began producing the *Maine Idea* , a newspaper of learner writings and letters that was distributed as an insert in the *Fertilizer.*

The Summer Academy of 1994 became the Summer Institute. CALL and Horizon staff created a "Den of Inquiry" that modeled using methods that were inclusive of multiple intelligences. Teachers highlighted their "Go Getter" projects at a curriculum fair. The "Go Getter" projects were teacher projects funded by CALL to develop curriculum that modeled using portfolio as the center of their teaching. The Maine Math Motivators, our state's team that was examining the Math Standards and alternative ways to teach math, also provided demonstrations and projects. Learners attended the Institute for the first time, and produced the first copy of the *Maine Idea* here. The first interagency strand brought together adult education programs and ASPIRE (JOBS) regional managers to talk about developing courses that met the needs of ASPIRE clients. Several Memorandum of Understanding contracts were developed as a result of that meeting, and interagency referrals increased by 25%.

The Summer Institute sparked a lot of creativity in the field over the next year. Portfolio assessment was becoming a reality in a lot of programs. Learners were leading the way by presenting their portfolios to teachers and talking about how beneficial the process was to their learning and self-esteem. The field was writing up their experiences for the *Fertilizer.* Horizon was making connections in the field and providing training. CALL was providing training and connections for new teachers and directors, and developed tool kits to help collect resources and materials on subjects pertinent to program success. The Division of Adult and Community Education was supporting the changes and highlighted them at state-wide meetings. It seemed that every time you turned around something was happening.

Learners were leading the way by presenting their portfolios to teachers and talking about how beneficial the process was to their learning and self-esteem.

The March, 1995 Last Step to Implementation Quality Indicator meeting once again brought the field together for change. The Last Step toward implementation was to develop standards for our four Indicators. The first standards to be developed would be for Indicator 1: Learner Expectations. At this meeting, Maine adopted the four principles outlined in the preliminary paper by Sondra Stein of the National Institute for Literacy as the four standards for our state for Quality Indicator 1: Literacy as Access and Orientation; Literacy as Voice; Literacy as Independent Action; and Literacy as Bridge to the Future. That day, learners, teachers, tutors, directors struggled with creating benchmarks for the four standards.

The staff of CALL and Horizon synthesized the field input from that day into a draft standards document. The document included all of the field generated data from the March meeting including creating five levels of learning and teaching, not just 3. It was clear from the field input that there needed to be a pre-literacy level as Level 1 and a post secondary level as Level 5 to reflect all of the populations Adult Education has as customers. In June, there were five public hearings around the state to solicit feedback on the draft.

The 1995 Summer Institute, "Charting Our Course," revolved around the standards document draft. Learners, teachers, tutors, counselors, administrators, Department of Labor JTPA providers and state officials worked together to examine the standards draft, provide input for another revision and examined interagency ties. As a result of the Institute, Maine is in the process of developing one set of standards for adult education, ASPRE (JOBS) and job training including JTPA. We are doing this together with all the other agencies that work with educating and training adults.

So, how much change has there been in the last three years? We have changed our method of assessment, refused to grade-level adults, developed new teaching methodologies using portfolios as the center, developed life skills curriculum in partnership with students, instituted a continuous grassroots process for change, developed several state-wide teams and many teacher projects using an inquiry model, institutionalized a state-wide adult education newspaper, developed a student leadership group called the Life Long Learners, delivered staff development on an on-going basis instead of the "one shot" model, created regional alliances that include other agencies, produced tool kits that are accessible to anyone, changed the RFP for Adult Basic Education to reflect the Quality Indicators, created and sustained a key interagency group called the CSD and adopted four Quality Indicators and four standards for Indicator 1.

Just think of what the next three years will bring!

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Issues in Assessment of Native Language Literacy

by
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Native Language Literacy (NLL) instruction for adults is increasingly becoming part of Adult Basic Education (ABE). A small but growing number of programs offering English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) also offers adults basic literacy instruction in their mother tongue. In 1992 a national survey uncovered 68 such programs in the continental U.S., an increase of 400% during the previous eleven years.

The main reason for the increase seems to be that ESOL teachers and program directors are recognizing that there needs to be a program or class that addresses the population that does not respond to instruction at the most basic level of English. Parallel to that, the current literature in second language acquisition and bilingual education unequivocally supports the thesis that having reading skills in the native language (L1) facilitates reading comprehension in the second language (L2). Most recently it has been suggested that the acquisition of L2 oral skills may also be influenced by reading skills in L1 (Earl, 1994). There are also reports that learners in NLL programs become more involved in the lives of their community and children (Gillespie, 1994).

Despite the promise of the NLL approach, the controversy surrounding bilingual education and consequent lack of funding have contributed to the lack of research in this new field. Most NLL programs have developed as grassroots responses to the needs of ethnic communities and have struggled with the development of teaching strategies, assessment, placement and curriculum, with no resources left for research. As more NLL programs are established, the interest and need to learn from them increases. The National Center on Adult Literacy and the Center for Applied Linguistics, responding to that need, have published several documents describing NLL programs across the country. Here I will draw from such documents and my survey of programs in Massachusetts to provide the reader with a discussion and summary of some of the issues posed by the assessment and instruction of adult learners of Native Language Literacy. (This discussion does not, however, include Native American Adult Literacy.)

Who qualifies as an NLL learner?

Candidates for NLL instruction are adults who speak a language other than English as their mother tongue and have attended 0-5 years of elementary school. Although they may have acquired "survival English skills", they are overwhelmed by the difficulties or memories of negative experiences presented by a school-like environment and teaching which relies on the use of the blackboard, books, and grammatical explanations. Many deny their condition to avoid the stigma associated with illiteracy and rely on individually-created devices to cope with the demands of their community life. Even if their strategies successfully allow them to participate in the life of a community where perhaps the majority speaks their native language, they are effectively barred from accessing the services offered by most ESOL/ABE programs (Klassen, 1991, 1993). They are also not apt to enroll in programs that offer instruction to obtain the GED in a language other than English, such as Spanish and French simply because the level of instruction is too demanding. It is conceivable that many of these adults, aware of the unavailability of services, refrain from contacting ESOL programs.

If the minimal goal of an ESOL/ ABE program is to provide adults with the necessary skills to "lead a meaningful life in the community where they live in the USA," then the acquisition of reading and writing skills in English are essential.

Within the ESOL program the NLL learner is among the students who make little or no progress at the lower levels. As other immigrants who have deferred receiving ESOL instruction, s/he may have developed some sort of "pidgin" English that allows him/her to communicate at work, at stores, and hospitals, but when it comes to understanding and acquiring the patterns of standard English used in a classroom, s/he faces insurmountable difficulties.

The Big Picture

If the minimal goal of an ESOL/ABE program is to provide adults with the necessary skills to "lead a meaningful life in the community where they live in the USA,", then the acquisition of reading and writing skills in English are essential. By far the hardest hurdle to cross in this process is to ascertain what needs to be done and how much can be accomplished with the resources available. Assessment not only of individual learner skills and goals but also assessment of the community and the collective group of learners entering your program needs to happen first to see if, in fact, an NLL class is feasible.

At least two situations/signs can indicate the need for native language literacy: 1) a large group of immigrant adults with low literacy skills and from different language backgrounds, or 2) a large group of adults lacking literacy skills, from similar cultural backgrounds. Since most programs have limited capacity to address all the needs of all learners, the preferred strategy to address the first situation is to create an ESOL literacy class, where whole language and participatory methodology will be used. The staff of an ESOL/ABE program may also opt for providing some sort of bilingual instruction to those adults with the aid of tutors, or for referring learners to a program that does.

To address the second situation, approaches to NLL, as described in the literature (Gillespie, 1994, Wrigley, et al, 1992) adhere to the following patterns:

1. Sequential (or transitional) in which learners receive native language literacy until they reach a certain level of literacy and then transfer to an ESOL beginners class.
2. "Bilingual", in which both the native language and English are used in the instruction of literacy in English. In this case the native language is used to translate the meaning of words and to explain aspects of grammar.
3. Coordinate, in which learners receive NLL instruction and primarily oral English skills training in separate classes, taught by two different teachers.

Most NLL instruction is a combination of the "bilingual" and the coordinate approaches, since the adults rarely want to wait to begin receiving instruction in English. Most existing NLL programs are for speakers of Spanish, although there are programs in other languages such as Haitian creole, Hmong, and Khmer.

With all NLL approaches, several issues with respect to resources, learners and outcomes arise. Lack of materials in the language of the learners is the most often articulated problem. Among Spanish programs teachers use textbooks used in Latin American countries and in bilingual programs in the U.S. with the constraint that most are inadequate for two reasons. One is that many adults lacking literacy skills speak a regional Spanish — whose vocabulary may vary considerably from one region of Latin America to another — and not what is disseminated in textbooks. The second reason is that the materials are geared for the instruction of children and therefore ignore the rich cognitive background that adults bring to the acquisition of reading skills.

Among Hmong programs materials are mainly teacher-made although there are resources available from California, Minnesota, and Wisconsin where large groups of Hmongs and Laotians have settled. In Haitian creole there is also a lack of standard materials since it is fairly recent that the language has been coded in its written form. These circumstances have had the positive outcome of forcing teachers and programs to develop curricula that respond to the linguistic and cultural needs of the adult learners in the particular setting of an immigrant in the U.S. In Milwaukee, for example, where there is a large concentration of Hmong speakers, a 0-4 participatory curriculum was developed through a collaboration between the Milwaukee Area Technical College and the Lao Family Community, Inc.

In Massachusetts, Spanish native language literacy programs offer either the sequential or the coordinate approach, depending on the goals of the program. The Puerto Rican Cultural Center in Springfield, for example, offers the sequential model and Alianza Hispana in Boston offers the coordinate model. Other programs combine approaches. At the Haitian Multi-Service Center (HMSC), for example, students in level-one receive literacy instruction in Haitian creole at the same time that they receive mathematics in a combination of English and Haitian creole. In the level-two class, literacy and mathematics are taught in two languages.

At the Community Learning Center (CLC), students begin in a class where reading is taught in both Haitian creole and English. That is, the teacher uses vocabulary from both languages to show the relationship between the spoken and the written word. The proportion of Haitian creole and English used in the classroom shifts from 75%/25% to 25%/75% by the end of the term. At that time the students shift to a beginner's English class with the option to continue the bilingual literacy class until they feel comfortable taking only English.

At the two-level Hmong-Lao Foundation Literacy Program in Fitchburg, adults learn to read and write in Hmong while receiving extensive pronunciation skills training in English, since speaking

English is what poses the most difficulties for Hmong adults.

Implications for assessment

Assessment is tightly linked to the goals and methodology of teaching in a program. As can be expected, since the goal of most NLL programs is to assist learners to acquire English skills, standardized tests in English are the most common instruments used to gauge progress at the end of any term or cycle. Methods and tools used by programs to assess initial and ongoing development of verbal skills vary widely, however, adjusted to goals and resources of each one. McGrail (1992), in a summary of assessment in native language literacy programs in the U.S., mentions that the most developed form of assessment is the initial intake. I have divided the following discussion into two sections: Spanish language programs and others, since the majority of NLL programs are in Spanish.

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Initial Assessment: Spanish programs

Among Spanish programs the California Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) in Spanish and the Spanish Assessment of Basic Education (SABE) are the most popular since they provide a grade level equivalent score. However, they are designed for children, not for adults. The single test designed for adults is the ABLE in Spanish. Recently a Spanish translation of the TABE has been published but has no record of performance in the literature. Another drawback of standardized tests is that the learners unfamiliar with multiple-choice formats may be assessed unfairly. As a result of the lack of adequate standardized tests, programs use a combination of standardized tests and teacher-made instruments to obtain information for placement decisions. It is especially common to all programs to have an informal method to assess writing skills, mainly to be sensitive to the feelings of inadequacy that low-literacy adults have.

The intensity and scope of the assessment can vary significantly according to the resources of the program. Not all NLL programs can afford to offer a continuum of levels or support that allows learners to transfer adequately from the native language to an ESOL class and the initial assessment is reflective of that aspect of the program.

At a small program in Massachusetts, for example, the teacher asks adults to read aloud from a Spanish beginning reader series, to write a few phrases and solve a few simple arithmetic problems. Subsequently she places the adult in one of two groups comprising the entire program.

In contrast, at the ten-year old El Paso Community College Literacy Education Action Program, staff members observe verbal language dominance, writing skills, and ability to complete forms, at an initial screening through which they determine whether the adult has a reading level above the sixth grade in his/her native language (Gillespie & Ballering, 1992). Anyone at that level is referred to an ESOL program while others begin a two-week exploration class in which the learner's goals and acquired skills are carefully examined before placement. A student in that program may eventually choose to follow a vocational track or prepare for college.

Programs that offer NLL in Spanish up to the level of GED preparation and ESOL may test a student in both languages. If a student arrives requesting GED preparation, the initial assessment is in Spanish and the student is placed in the appropriate group level and may continue that track up to the ASE level. Staff will use either a standardized test, or a process or instrument created at the program to determine when the learner has achieved a sixth-grade level of reading comprehension. (The Boston Public Schools battery of cloze tests is also used by some programs in Boston for that purpose.) At that level the learner is deemed able to enroll in a beginning ESOL class. If a learner requests ESOL at intake, his/her Spanish literacy level is assessed along with English listening and reading comprehension and written and oral proficiency.

Other Programs

The Haitian Multi-Service Center (HMSC) program in Boston, widely described in the literature, has historically responded to the needs of its learners. An assessment instrument including an oral interview, reading comprehension and writing (developed by Loren McGrail and Marie Julien) that includes English and French serves as the preliminary placement test. Those whose educational background and performance in this initial interview demonstrate the ability to progress in ESOL classes, are placed at the appropriate level. At a second stage of assessment the Creole Biliteracy teacher, Louis Daniel, interviews the learner. During this interview, Daniel indirectly obtains the information necessary to determine whether or not the person can read or write and where to place him/her in the two-level biliteracy program.

Similarly, at the CLC in Massachusetts and the Hmong-Lao Foundation in Fitchburg, the learner skills in both the native language and English are examined by a bilingual staff member. At the Lao Family Community in Milwaukee, an initial brief interview to determine the student's educational background is followed by the pro-gram's placement test. In addition, the BEST for English skills and the bilingual TABE for mathematics are given to satisfy the requirements of funding sources.

Besides asking adults the level of schooling they have attained at intake, a program may choose to use the Native Language Literacy Screening Device developed by Dr. Patricia Mooney-Gonzalez in New York, available in several languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Haitian Creole, Italian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Tigrinya, and Vietnamese)*. Feedback has been scarce but positive from ESOL programs in Massachusetts which have used it. One ESOL program director reported that it helped her to place students and eventually convinced her of the need to offer NLL instruction.

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* *The instrument, along with instructions, can be obtained by contacting any of the SABES Regional Centers. The reader may also contact the A.L.R.I./SABES Boston Regional Center for additional literature and assessment instruments which have been compiled by Maria E. Gonzalez, 617-782-8956.*

On-going assessment

Spanish programs that offer only a few levels of NLL do not use standardized testing to transfer a student from one level to another. In small programs and those which concentrate on developing reading and arithmetic skills in the native language, on-going assessment emphasizes teacher observations and some sort of portfolio assessment that includes writing skills.

Sequential programs that offer NLL up to GED preparation in Spanish have some form of "in house" assessment process to determine when students have a competence level in the native language that will allow them to progress in the ESOL classes; they may also use standardized tests. Essentially the student may not take ESOL classes until the sixth grade reading comprehension level in the native language is achieved. In some cases, the initial assessment tool is used throughout the program to gauge the progress of the student. At the Casa Aztlan program in Chicago, for example, a staff-developed test examines six levels of basic skills and is used at the end of each of three eight-week modules. At the Puerto Rican Cultural Center and many others, the SABE in Spanish serves as the standardized measure which, in conjunction with teacher observations and portfolio assessment, is used to recommend program changes twice a year.

In coordinate models, where ESOL instruction is provided early in the program, ongoing assessment in NLL has less relevance for ESOL programmatic changes. For example, at Alianza Hispana in Boston, NLL students at the lowest level are allowed to enroll in the beginning ESOL class after the first ten-week term is over. At Oficina Hispana, those students are enrolled immediately in the beginning ESOL class but are required only to "audit" the class. As teachers observe their progress in the NLL classes, they are exhorted to become increasingly active participants in the ESOL classes.

More than one teacher has commented to me, that a student able to read at the third grade level in the native language is able to read at that same level in English but lacks the grammatical competence to comprehend beyond that level. As a result, teachers of the ESOL beginning classes know not to expect rapid progress among students with basic skills below a sixth grade level.

As in small Spanish programs, ongoing assessment for NLL students is not standardized in programs offered in Haitian creole and other languages in which standardized testing in the native language is irrelevant. In these programs crucial assessments are those that can help determine when a complete transition from NLL to English or to ESOL instruction is reasonable. The degree of testing structure seems to vary according to the scope of the program as well. At the HMSC and the CLC, which are large programs with a history of stability and where students may continue in the NLL class practically as long as they wish, teacher-made tests and observations and portfolio assessment are used to coordinate NLL, basic skills, and ESOL instruction. At the Lao Family Community, where learners receive literacy and basic skills instruction in Hmong, ESOL, and GED preparation, and the curriculum is competency-based, teachers use pre-and post tests in Hmong produced at the institution and tailored to the population it serves.

Final assessment

Final assessment in the native language may be the sixth-grade reading level measure that indicates the ability to transfer and begin an ESOL class or the GED examination in those languages where it is made available. When the program is modeled after the transitional pattern, achieving the sixth grade reading level is not the last hurdle for the students. At Mujeres Unidas en Accion in Boston, the GED in Spanish is the final step; at the Puerto Rican Cultural Center, the sixth grade reading level marks the beginning of ESOL and the GED the final grade. At the PRCC and at Alianza Hispana, adults may continue the ESOL sequence up to the last level and decide, with the help of a counselor, whether to go on to vocational training or college. At the HMSC there is a similar "in house" final assessment at the end of the ESOL sequence that leads them on to further schooling.

Programs that are linked to vocational training usually are required to use standardized tests, such as the BEST or TABE, at the end of the ESOL sequence to recommend transition to an all-English instruction environment, although ongoing assessment is less formal. At Oficina Hispana, after obtaining the GED in Spanish, students must achieve at the highest level of the TABE before entering the job training program. Similarly, at the Lao Family Community in Milwaukee, learners must reach the 4.0 grade level or above as determined by the TABE before being referred to the Milwaukee Technical Area College for job training or higher education studies.

Conclusions

It is clear that the scope of a Native Language Literacy and the goals of the program have a great influence on the type of assessment process used by staff to recommend transfer or program changes in the program of study of its adult learners. The first language of the learners has implications for assessment since it may mean having access to the convenience of standardized testing. For programs in languages other than Spanish, program staff are forced to create unique instruments and processes to assess the attainment of crucial levels of reading comprehension.

Even for Spanish literacy programs, however, consideration of the cultural background and goals of the students is essential to provide adequate instruction and assessment. The above accounts of the assessment methods from different programs strongly suggests that satisfactory progress of learners in ESOL classes depends greatly on whether the learner has reached at least a certain level of reading comprehension in his/her native langugage, which, in terms of elementary school, means a sixth grade level.

This aspect of the process of second language acquisition among adults echoes the findings in second language acquisition at the elementary education level that indicate that children without literacy skills in their native language need from six to seven years of school-

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ing in the native language before being able to perform adequately in an L2 instruction environment (Collier, 1992). Since it is often at the instance of adults eager to receive ESOL instruction that early transfers and misplacements occur, this finding underscores the importance of proper counseling and placement while attending to the affective needs of the learners.

In order to attend to the needs of adults with low-level reading comprehension skills, it is evident that Native Language Literacy instruction along with or prior to ESOL instruction is the ideal solution. It is also necessary to understand, however, that the progress of those adult learners in ESOL classes will be a function of the reading comprehension level in the native language, the method and content of instruction in the native language, and the level of literacy required in the ESOL classes.

Although Native Language Literacy instruction offers a viable alternative to attending the needs of learners of English as a second language with limited literacy skills in their mother tongue, there are many issues still unresolved within that growing specialty. One is the ability to identify and assist learning disabled adults and those with highly developed oral literacy skills but lacking the rudiments to progress in highly decontextualized learning environments. In addition, it seems essential that ESOL and ABE instruction be linked to these programs for purposes of adequate placement, instruction, and transition. Knowing that adequate services are not available, NLL adults refrain from registering at ESOL programs and remain unaccounted for. The estimates of how large of a population is in need of NLL instruction are therefore, at best, only vague.

It is my hope that enough practitioners in Massachusetts will continue the much-needed sharing of ideas and discussion of these and other issues to have a significant impact on assessment and instruction.

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ADULT EDUCATION CENTERS OFFERING NATIVE LANGUAGE LITERACY

Massachusetts

Bunker Hill Community College
76 Crest Ave. Chelsea, MA 02150
Tel (617) 228-2102.
Contact: Wilma Bonaparte, Dean, Chelsea Campus.

Community Learning Center
19 Brookline Street, Cambridge, MA 02139.
Tel (617) 349-6363.
Language: Haitian creole
Contact: Cecile De Mornay.

Centro Hispano de Chelsea
248 Broadway, Chelsea, MA 02150
Tel (617) 884-3238
Contact: Michelle Brown.

Centro Presente
54 Essex Street, Cambridge, MA 02139
Tel (617) 497-9080
Contact: Juan Gonzalez, Ed.D., Director of Education.

Community Education Project
JUNTOS program
317 Main Street, Holyoke MA 01046.
Tel (413) 538-5770.
Contact: Julie Rapaport, Executive Director

Haitian Multi-Service Center
12 Bicknell Street, Dorchester, MA 02121
Tel (617)436-2848.
Contact: Jean Marc Jean Baptiste, Executive Director.

Hampshire County Jail and House of Correction
205 Rocky Hill Road, P.O. Box 7000, Northampton, MA 01061-7000.
Contact: Connie Cronin, Director/ Nan Walsh, instructor.

Harborside Community Center
312 Border Street, East Boston, MA 02128.
Tel (617) 491-3178
Contact: Paul Trunnell, Director.

Hmong Lao Family Foundation Association
345 Main Street, Fitchburg, MA 01420.
Contact: Mr. Kou Yang, (508) 342-1892.

International Institute of Greater Lawrence
454 N. Canal Street, Lawrence, MA 01840.
Tel (508) 687-0981.
Contact: Rafael Abislaiman, Director, or Jenny Garcia, instructor.

La Alianza Hispana
409 Dudley Street, Roxbury, MA 02119.
Tel (617) 427-7175
Contact: Paul Mullaney, Director of Education.

Lawrence Public Schools Adult Learning Center
243 So. Broadway St., Lawrence, MA 01843.
Tel (508) 975-5917.
Contact: Jeanne O'Brien, Director of Education.

Mujeres Unidas en Accion
1534 Dorchester Ave., MA 02122.
Tel (617) 265-3015.
Contact: Argentina Cuevas, instructor.

Oficina Hispana
125 Armory Street, Jamaica Plain, MA 02119.
Tel. (617) 929-1400
Contact: Jaime Talero, Executive Director/ Lillian Newton-Arango, Director of Intake.

Puerto Rican Cultural Center
2345 Main Street, Springfield, MA 01107.
Tel (413) 737-7450
Contact: Anna Rodriguez, Director.

Salem Harbor Community Development Corp.
50 Leavitt Street, Salem MA 01970
Tel (508) 745-8071.
Contact: Deborah Mercier-Cuenca, instructor.

OTHER STATES *(described in M.Gillespie & Ballering, E., Eds., 1992)*

Casa Aztlan. Chicago, Illinois.
Contact: Jose Hunter.

El Barrio Popular. New York, New York.
Contact: Klaudia M. Rivera/ Deidre Freeman.

El Paso Community College Literacy Education Action Program. El Paso, Texas. Contact: Carol Clymer-Spradling/ Celia Esparza.

Lao Family Community, Inc. and Milwaukee Area Technical College Community Based Organization. Milwaukee, WI. Contact: Douglas Doua Vue.

Triton Community College Adult Continuing Education. New Horizons Center, Melrose Park, Illinois.
Contact: Lilia Salazar-Holst.

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The Worker Education Program at SEIU Local 285

by
Jenny Lee Utech

Worker Education Program
SEIU Local 285
Boston

The Worker Education Program (WEP) was founded more than four years ago to build educational opportunities for SEIU Local 285 members and other workers at area hospitals in Massachusetts. In January, 1995 WEP began offering ESL and ABE classes at six hospitals through a National Workplace Literacy grant from the federal Department of Education and administered through the Massachusetts Department of Education. Students in these classes work mostly in low-end service jobs — housekeeping, maintenance, or as nursing assistants. Students in the ESL classes mostly want to improve their speaking to be better understood, and to work on their English reading and writing. ABE students at one hospital want basic reading and writing skills; at the other two sites, students seek more advanced communication, presentation and writing skills. Classes are scheduled based on when workers can come to class (shifts), not skill levels, so each class has a range of skills.

WEP teachers respect and draw on the knowledge and creativity that adult learners bring to the classroom. We are developing a participatory, student-centered curriculum that has workers' interests and issues at its core. Through one-on-one, small group and whole class activities, teachers and students work together to address a wide range of issues regarding their work and communities. We feel that education at the worksite should develop workers' understanding of the complex forces at their workplace and give them tools to deal with those issues.

How we came up with the tool

We started out wanting to develop a pre/post assessment tool for our ESL and ABE classes because 1) we as a staff had been struggling with the question of systematizing our assessment to adequately measure gains in our program as a whole, and 2) programs funded by the National Workplace Literacy grant must use placement and pre/post testing tools. The DOE reporting forms ask for "results" from pre- and post-assessment; you check off whether your program is using standardized tests (CASAS, TABE, ABLE, etc.), supervisor ratings, self-esteem inventories, group interviews, job-related skill competency tests, or any of a myriad of tools.

We felt it would make sense to develop something we could use in all of the classes. This would "standardize" the pre/post assessment part of our program and make reporting easier. We also wanted to see if using the same tool could help teachers with diverse student groups have a common beginning and ending point; this might help us see how students are progressing across the program.

WEP teachers were particularly

interested in developing an "alternative" assessment tool. We feel that standardized tests or skill competency tests often don't capture many kinds of learning. They use decontextualized language, assume a certain literacy level, and don't reflect how students may be using literacy in their daily lives.

We had all read about, experimented with and developed alternative assessment tools in previous classes. Some teachers have taken ideas from Adventures in Assessment in previous classes, some have drawn on chapter 8, "Evaluation: What Counts as Progress?" in Elsa Aurbach's Making Meaning, Making Change. We set a meeting date to discuss the prospective tool.

At the meeting, we all talked about what we wanted our tool to be and do. It should build on students' strengths, not show them what they can't do. We wanted an assessment tool that would provide the learners with choices so students would have some control over the assessment process. In addition, we wanted a customized tool that would measure what we're actually teaching in our classes: basic reading, writing and communication skills that can be transferred to learners work and home lives. We had already placed students in classes with a one-page intake interview and a brief reading/writing sample, and had some idea of what workers wanted to focus on. We also felt our tool should reflect learners' progress in affective areas like students speaking with more confidence, starting to use language in new ways, or developing new writing strategies.

We wanted an assessment tool that would provide the learners with choices so students would have some control over the assessment process.

Like our curriculum, we wanted our assessment to be workplace-oriented. In other words, we wanted it to measure changes in students' language use at the worksite as well as outside work.

We decided to have a three-component pre/post assessment: a reading sample, a writing sample and an interview. The reading and writing samples would capture changes in the basic skills we are teaching, the interview would get at changes in language use in other areas. One group of teachers put together a packet of readings, comprehension questions, and a writing question; another group developed the interview.

How we thought the tool would work

Our expectation was that learners would work with a reading and writing sample at the beginning and end of the term. Comparing the two would allow students and teachers to observe progress. The interview, conducted at the beginning and end between teacher and learner, would capture changes and progress in language use in and outside the workplace.

Reading and writing samples: Learners could choose a single reading from a packet of six texts of varying difficulty from published collections of student writings, short stories and novels. After reading the piece they'd chosen, each student would discuss it with the teacher using a few basic comprehension questions (we wrote two or three questions for each reading). The teacher would write down the student's answers and any other notes on reading strategies, difficulties, etc. The student would then write a response to an open-ended question: *When you read this, what do you think about? What does this remind you of? How does this compare with your experience?*

The readings were all about people working; they included a housekeeper's description of her work, an immigrant describing differences in working in her country and here, etc. We hoped learners would connect to these themes enough to be motivated to respond in writing. (And we wanted the writing sample to be interesting and meaningful!)

When choosing texts for the packet, we found it difficult to pick readings that would cover the range of basic ESL through "advanced" ABE. ABE and ESL teachers also had different ideas about which questions to ask for reading comprehension (what to look for). We wondered if the packet would be equally useful for both ABE and ESL teachers and students.

Interview: The interview included questions about students' prior schooling, where and when they read, write or speak English, when they use their native language (for ESL students), and goals for the cycle.

What actually happened

Pre-assessment pros

1. **Time:** Since the cycle had already started by the time we developed them, teachers did the pre-assessment in class. Each class handled the activities differently. Some teachers took students out of the class one by one while the rest of the class worked on another assignment; others had learners all working on reading and writing at the same time, helping each student as s/he was ready to discuss the reading and then write. Most teachers took a whole class (two hours) to do the reading and writing samples and needed another class to do interviews.

2. **Choice:** students could choose the reading selection they were most comfortable with; this relaxed them and may have resulted in more "productive" reading and writing. If a learner chooses a reading obviously too "easy" for her/his level, teachers could do that reading with them but also suggest they try a more difficult passage.

Pre-assessment cons

1. **Logistics:** Some teachers found it difficult to juggle all the individual attention needed during the reading and writing samples. One teacher, for example, said it was hard to focus on the student with whom she was working, knowing other students were finishing up the reading, having trouble with it, or waiting to start writing. Other teachers felt that the reading, comprehension and writing activities took too much time.

2. **Levels:** Even though the reading selection included a few very short, basic pieces (one with just one sentence), there were still students who were at a very basic literacy level. For these students, the tool didn't really capture what they could do. For the more advanced ABE students, the readings and basic comprehension questions were easy, and did not always measure their ability to use more advanced reading strategies.

3. **Interview/timing:** The interview turned out to be cumbersome and repetitive. Some questions repeated information asked during intake, others had already come up and been addressed during previous goal-setting activities. Some instructors, not wanting to pull individual students out one by

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one, turned the interview into a whole class activity. Two teachers, for example, posted interview questions on newsprint for discussion and made class charts with students' responses. Using discussion helped students; they could hear and reflect on other people's experiences, and then talked about their own more fully than some students who did the interview alone with the teacher. A few teachers who did individual interviews ended up completing them over the course of two or three classes.

Post-assessment pros

1. Familiarity: Because students had already done the activities at the beginning of the cycle, students were familiar with them and could work comfortably. Teachers found it easier to juggle the reading and writing during class.

2. Assessing change: For some teachers and students, doing the same activities and comparing the two sets of samples proved useful in assessing changes in reading and writing strategies during the term. In one ESL class, for example, students talked about how they felt more comfortable with reading, and noted that they were able to write much more independently than at the beginning of the term.

Post-assessment cons

1. Choice: Some teachers reported that students chose the same reading selection they had done during the pre-assessment. While doing the same selection can show changes (teachers expected this might happen), it can also mislead. Some students, for example, may have remembered the discussion from the pre-assessment, and relied on that rather than the text to do the reading comprehension questions. In some cases, teachers let students do the same selection and then also asked them to choose another.

Other students chose an "easier" passage than the one they had done for the pre-assessment. Even though teachers could encourage students to pick a "harder" piece, they felt it necessary to allow student choice. Teachers then found themselves asking how to interpret a student choosing an easier reading. It could be because the student was tired, felt rushed, or wanted to show improvement and therefore went for a "safe" choice. But we didn't really know the reasons for students choosing as they did. Sometimes it was hard to distinguish between what students have remembered and internalized from the pre-assessment, and what new progress they've made when they do the post-assessment. For some students, remembering and internalizing is a sign of progress.

Some reflections

We set out to develop a "standard" tool we could use for ESL and ABE at all of our sites. But we also wanted it to be flexible, so teachers could adapt it to meet their teaching styles and students' needs. Teachers did adapt it, maybe to the point that it was no longer very standard. Also, ABE teachers found that they wanted to measure skills (reading and writing) strategies that the reading and writing samples didn't capture. ESL teachers with beginning speakers found the interview (designed to reflect affective areas and language use), somewhat useless (a few teachers conducted interviews in students' native languages when they could). Our program may need to develop separate assessment tools for ABE and ESL classes.

Most importantly, we wanted assessment activities that would help *students* see their progress. Comparing reading and writing samples helped some students see areas they'd improved. Many students need to learn how to see and evaluate their progress; this is a process that takes time.

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Bringing Learners into Goal-Setting

by
Anne Burke,
Linda Gosselin,
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Quinsigamond
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Quinsigamond Community College has several adult education programs, one on campus at night and several during the morning at off-campus sites in Worcester and Southbridge. Our program holds classes in the morning at St. Paul's School. We offer ASE, ABE, and ESL.

Our adult ESL students represent a cross-section of the immigrant community in Worcester. The largest segment of our student population is Spanish-speaking, with the majority from Puerto Rico and the rest from various Central and South American countries. They make up 60-70% of our student enrollment. The remainder of the students are from a variety of countries in Asia, the Mideast, and Eastern Europe and Russia.

Our day students are predominantly female (80%). Some are employed or are on public assistance. Many are housewives. Some are single parents; others are single and never married. Many of the male students work at night and seem evenly divided between being married or single. Ages range from 18-70.

The program seeks to serve the needs of our students, whether they are seeking better employment, hoping to pursue higher education, or just coming to enrich their own language skills.

The program is an open enrollment, open ended one. Each of the three classes must maintain a class enrollment of 13 students. As students reach their goals or withdraw early from the program, new students are accepted into the program from a waiting list.

Working in the Community

Our community-based program serves adults with limited English proficiency who desire to maintain and improve their quality of life in American society. Our goal is to enable adult learners to actively formulate their own educational goals.

This goal is attained through a variety of ways. When students join a class, they complete an IEP (individual education plan), identifying for instructors and themselves the learners' education goals. At the start of each curriculum unit of study, students and their instructor decide on which particular areas they want to work, via a needs assessment/interest profile. Together they adapt the curriculum to class needs.

The structure of our ESL program is based on the MELT (Mainstream English Language Training) student performance levels, adapted to our own three proficiency levels. Level 1 includes SPL 0-2; Level 2 consists of SPL 3 and 4; Level 3 embraces SPL 5 and 6. Students may move to higher levels as they complete their goals and are assessed to be ready.

Students meet nine hours a week for 38 weeks each year. They can continue in the program until they complete all three levels.

This tri-level program design was created in 1991. Before that, each instructor worked independently, covering life skills and grammar randomly. This program weakness often led to repetition of some life skill materials and omission of others. It was difficult to assess the readiness of a student to progress to the next level. To improve our program and to better meet the needs of our students, we decided a more formal curriculum was needed.

In 1991, we three ESL instructors won approval to use program development funds to create a curriculum that would provide better consistency of skill development from one level to the next.

Working together throughout the summer of 1991, we designed guidelines for life skill competencies, grammar, and vocabulary appropriate to each level, flexible enough to meet our instructional needs and the individual educational plans of our students.

Assessment Development

After utilizing the curriculum for one year, we determined that we needed a more formal instrument for assessing a student's progress and readiness to move on to the next level.

Our initial means of assessing student progress within this curriculum was very subjective. Every ten weeks the teacher would write a narrative concerning each student's general progress in reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

This means of assessment did not really provide us the information we needed. It didn't inform us enough as to a student's progress in specific life skills in class nor which skills were required to review or to further study in class.

Therefore, in the summer of 1992, again with program development funds, we collaborated on improving the assessment system. We started by examining various articles from **Adventures in Assessment** to see what other programs were using to evaluate student progress.

In particular we found "Three by Three by Four: Ongoing Assessment at the Community Learning Center," by Karen Ebbitt, Priscilla Lee, Pam Nelson, and Joann Wheeler in Volume 2 of *Adventures in Assessment* helpful. Using it as a guide we decided that our assessment would not include a listing of assumed topics to be covered, but would be a form that would allow the instructor and the learners to review and list the skills and materials presented in class.

Our decision was based on our philosophy of encouraging our learners to fully participate in their own assessment. Because it was important to have some way of evaluating progress from the teacher's, as well as the student's, point of view, we developed two forms: a Student Self-Evaluation Form and a Teacher Assessment Form *(see Forms A and B, pp. 39-40).*

On the Student Self-Evaluation Form we wanted to use vocabulary that could be easily understood by most students. We decided to have students assess how they felt about their progress on competencies worked on in class. We thought it would be easier for lower level students to check-off how they felt about their progress, rather than writing about what specific progress they might have made. For more advanced students, we provided space so they could write about their progress in specific skill areas.

We decided that our assessment would not include a listing of assumed topics to be covered, but would be a form that would allow the instructor and the learners to review and list the skills and materials presented in class.

Assessment Format

The Student Self-Evaluation Form is completed through a brainstorming session in which students verbalize, with or without the teacher's help, the skills and materials covered over a particular period of time. Brainstorming offers the opportunity to review and recognize what was accomplished in class. The list of skills generated is written on the board and copied by the students on to their forms. For example, if we had worked on health and medicine the list of skills generated might be:

1. Review of parts of the body.
2. Review of simple illnesses.
3. Other common illnesses.
4. Describing one's symptoms.
5. Calling to make a doctor's appointment.
6. Filling out a medical history form.
7. Understanding medicine labels.
8. Common medical tests and procedures.

While the students assess their own progress in these competencies, the teacher records the same skills on a Teacher Assessment Form for each student as a separate assessment. As soon as possible after completion of both forms, student/teacher conferences are scheduled during class time to discuss and compare evaluations. The students and teacher use the forms to identify those items that have been mastered and those that require further study.

The conference allows discussion of any other difficulties with the unit or other factors affecting the student's learning that may not have come to light previously. The conference is important so that the instructor and learner have a mutual understanding of progress made and obstacles to learning. If there is a discrepancy between what progress the teacher and student think has been made, discussion follows. More often than not, the gaps occur because the student is not very confident in his/her ability. It is then the task of the teacher to remind the student of the successes he/she had in the classroom and what the student could do at the beginning and what the student can do better now.

This can be accomplished through telling the student what the teacher has observed or by showing the student samples of classwork done that demonstrate progress.

Reflections

Preparing for this article has encouraged us to formally evaluate our use of this on-going assessment and come up with the following list of strengths and weaknesses:

Strengths

1. The format is flexible enough to be used at any point in the program. Because students are only assessed on the materials covered from the time they enter the program, forms better serve our open-entry, open-exit program than standardized instruments. Standardized tests may test students on materials not covered in class. They would not give us the information we need in order to assess student progress and readiness to advance to the next level.
2. Student involvement in reflecting on skills and materials covered leads to their recognition that learning has

taken place.

3. A blank assessment form allows for teacher flexibility in adapting the curriculum to the needs of a particular group of students at each class level. This is important because what is covered in a particular unit of study can vary from year to year.
4. Use of a student form and a teacher form provides a balanced record to support the determination that a student is ready to move on to a new level. The higher level teacher can see the units covered, as well as the student's strengths and weaknesses. Because evaluation includes a self-assessment, the teacher also gains a sense of the student's own awareness of competency.
5. Instructors can use the instrument to identify areas that need further review or instruction. For example, if the majority of students respond "not good" to completing a job application, the instructor knows that further work in that area is necessary.

Weaknesses

1. Often two or more class days are required in order to complete the assessments and follow-up conferences. This time must be seen as necessary and a learning experience of its own value for the students.
2. Students tend to want to evaluate their ability, not their progress. In the theme of 'health,' for example, the students may have worked on calling to make a doctor's appointment. When it comes time to evaluate their ability to do this, students may tend to want to evaluate themselves as compared to a sample conversation used in class. It can be difficult to get them to evaluate themselves or their progress from the time they started and what they can now communicate.

CHANGES

Our on-going assessment tools are an effective means of assisting learners to evaluate their own progress and providing teachers with the documentation needed to determine a student's readiness to progress through the levels. However, we have seen a need to make some changes in order for our on-going assessment to better meet our program needs:

Because evaluation includes a self-assessment, the teacher also gains a sense of the student's own awareness of competency.

1. **Frequency of Use**
   The forms were originally intended to be administered every ten weeks, according to DOE guidelines. However, we found it more logical for assessment to take place after major units of study. This schedule is still in compliance with DOE expectations, while more in line with our own program and learner needs. The length of time between evaluations can vary according to how long it takes to cover a theme for a particular group of students.

2. **Form Changes**

   A. Student Self-Assessment Form
   We plan to add a section to the form for students to assess their attendance and participation.

   B. Teacher Assessment Form
   We have deleted the evaluation of attitude and effort as they are already reflected in attendance and participation. Also, trying to evaluate these factors separately can be very subjec-

tive. At times there can be personality clashes between a student and teacher. When it is time to evaluate a student's attitude and effort, these negatives may unconsciously influence a teacher's perception of these factors. A student's attendance can be quantified. If there are no factors influencing attendance, good attendance reflects good attitude toward learning. Observations of a student's active participation in class activities is evidence of effort to make progress.

CONCLUSION

Writing this article gave us the opportunity to reflect on our on-going assessment, identify its strengths and weaknesses, and decide what changes should be made to improve our assessment process.

Overall, we are pleased with the on-going assessment tools we use. They have served our needs well since we began designing them in 1991.

With the changes we are making in our on-going assessment tools, we are confident that they will continue to serve the needs of our program into the future.

☑

FORM A

Teacher Assessment Report

STUDENT ______________________________ DATE ______________________________

UNIT ____________________________ INSTRUCTOR ______________________________

	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Not Good
Attendance	______	______	______	______
Participation	______	______	______	______
Attitude	______	______	______	______
Effort	______	______	______	______

I. Competencies	Can do	Needs Work	Can't do
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			
II. Grammar Structures			
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

III. Other skill areas (strengths & weaknesses, plus factors affecting learning)

____

____

____

FORM B

Student Self-Assessment Report

NAME ______________________________ DATE ______________________________

UNIT ______________________________ TEACHER ______________________________

I. How do you feel about:	Very Good	Good	Not Good	Bad
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				
8.				
9.				
10.				

How do you feel about your general progress in this unit?

II. Skill Areas. How do you feel about your progress in these things?

1. Speaking and Listening				
2. Reading				
3. Writing				
4. Grammar				

III. General Comments

1. Now I can do these things better in English

____

____

2. I am still having problems with these things in English

____

____

Learning from Experience

Do ESOL Students Want to be Tested More Often?

by
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&
students at Beth Israel/Children's Hospital Workplace Education Program

Jewish Vocational
Service
Boston, MA

I am presently a worksite ESOL teacher for Jewish Vocational Services which provides on-site ESOL instruction for employees of Beth Israel and Children's Hospitals at all levels (from literacy to advanced).

When I was first approached about getting my students' input on assessment I was rather hesitant, uncertain if my students would want to have a discussion on assessment or want their feelings put on tape and print.

I decided to ask my Beginner 2 class (the highest level I taught at this time) if they would be willing to share their views. The class is made up of eight students from Central and South America, all of whom have had at least eight years of formal education in their countries. Most of the students work in the housekeeping department, others in Central Processing and in the Laundry department.

The class meets for an hour three times a week. The emphasis is on work-related language and on strengthening communicative skills. All students in the Beginner 2 class have fairly good aural/oral skills but lack basic structures and spelling to write correct and independently.

The class is highly motivated, and students give honest feedback on how they felt the class went and what they felt they needed for subsequent classes. I have taught the same group for over a year.

I took a copy of *Adventures in Assessment* into class and briefly explained what the journal was about, read the letter from the editor and then asked if they would be willing to share their opinions of assessment.

I was quite surprised by their overwhelmingly positive response. I thought that they would not be interested at all. I now began to look on the project as a learning experience for me. Like many other ESOL teachers I often wrestle with thoughts on assessment; Should I be testing students more often? Do students want to be tested? Would they be discouraged if they did not do so well? How much class time should I take for testing? What kinds of tests would measure their progress accurately/effectively and help students evaluate their own progress?

I have also felt a reluctance to test due to the lack of effective tests/tools that evaluate increases in levels of aural/oral skills and that capture the advances of the most limited of the ESOL learners. At the workplace, issues and questions of assessment are more evident since students' supervisors (and the students themselves) often would like to see more concrete evidence of progress. Other than the initial intake and placement tests, no formal tests are conducted in class. Level changes and end-of-the-cycle evaluations are based on classroom observations and individual teachers assessment tools like observations, on-going oral feedback activities, student writings, participation and attendance.

I went into my class the next day with my tape player. I handed out a list of questions and gave students a few minutes to look them over. I then proceeded to record the resulting discussion. Each student seemed eager to say a few words for every question. It was obvious this was a topic they wanted to discuss.

First we talked about tests in general. Students related their experiences with driver's license, citizenship and, of course, medical tests. They talked about tests in their native countries: to go from one grade to the next, for jobs where the applicant who scored the highest would get the job. They did not, however, have much experience with formal/informal English language tests.

We then went back to the questions. Some students chose to use this as a writing assignment; others just gave their answers orally.

Students said tests were *very* important. They said tests would enable students as well as teachers to see whether and how much a student learned or progressed. One student said, "Tests show you what you learned and where you need help." Another student pointed out that it is not enough to have classes all the time. "A test every once in a while is important to see if one is learning. If you study something you're supposed to know if you are learning something. Everyday class class class… then one day, a test. It is important to see if you are learning."

Another student said that she learned best from mistakes and that she would learn from the mistakes she made on a test. She likened testing to a new job where one would try to avoid making the same mistakes.

What surprised me most was their response to the question 'Do you like being tested?' All but one student said yes. One student remarked that the only kind of test that would make them very nervous would be one that would make them lose a job or fail. Students seemed surprised when I admitted that even though I knew the benefits of tests, I myself never liked any kind of testing. Hence, my own hesitation in not testing students was partly so as not to burden them with added stress that I often felt when being tested.

My own hesitation in not testing students was partly so as not to burden them with added stress that I often felt when being tested.

After some investigation the student who said she disliked tests was one who often got nervous around print (even though her skills were above average). It seemed important to this student that she was told what the test was about and that the instructions and format be clear and simple. "I don't like tests when I don't know what I am supposed to do. Sometimes I don't understand the instructions." She also remarked that she would like tests more when she has learned more grammar. Is this because the assessment tools to which she was accustomed tested grammar/structure, not communicative competence?

Most students indicated a preference for surprise tests every once in a while. They also think that at every cycle end (a cycle is usually anywhere from 10-12 weeks) there should be a final exam–one that would test all skills, as well as retention of vocabulary and content covered. For this final exam, students said they want the teacher to let them know in advance when they would be tested and that the teacher should prepare the students.

As a result of this project I have promised to test my students more often. I would like to spend more time and energy developing assessment tools for my classes that not only help me to evaluate their progress but also help students to evaluate their own progress and build on their strengths. As I develop these tools, I need to consider the concern of the students that instructions and expectations of the assessment process are clear.

We can get students in the dialogue by asking them about assessment/testing and involve them in the analysis of existing standardized and alternative tests and in the development of testing formats that address some of the issues raised by the students in this class.

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Letter

What Does It Mean to Get an Authentic Student Perspective?

by
Michele Verni

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SABES Adult Literacy
Hotline Coordinator/
Student Leadership
Coordinator

We all know it is difficult to get an authentic student perspective. However, I believe we all must try to incorporate this as a goal in thinking about adult basic education. The more we ask students and listen to their opinions, the more effective we will be in the classroom, and in making policy decisions that affect adult students and the services provided for them. Currently, programs are actively involving students in writing for student journals, being members of advisory boards, participating in student leadership mini-grants, etc.

I want to share my experience as a person in the field who is involved in a project that is striving to get an "authentic student perspective." The purpose of this letter is not to defend this project, but rather to look at and reflect the process of obtaining a statewide student perspective.

Learner's Voice in Public Policy

It all started at a World Education retreat. We had a small group discussion that led to the idea of getting the learner's voice in public policy. After the retreat three of us met to discuss this idea further. We wanted to find a vehicle that puts the "learner's voice" up front in the policymaking process. We wanted lawmakers to better understand the adult learner and how adult basic education (ABE) programs have affected their lives.

To find the authentic learner voice, we knew adult learners had to be involved at the start and in fact, they were. The first thing we did was gather a group of five students for a meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the idea of sending a survey and how the survey questions should be formulated. This committee of adult students was devised to provide a cross-section of adult students from different programs. Four of these students were involved in the student leadership mini grant projects and the fifth is a Massachusetts student delegate who has been very committed to student leadership activities.

At the meeting we asked the students, "How has your learning experience affected your life?" Each person spoke openly about their educational experience, its rewards and obstacles. Everyone shared a personal story about his or her involvement with adult basic education and how it has affected their lives. From the ensuing discussion we designed a survey, using the students' words for the core phrasing of the survey questions.

Our next challenge was to distribute this survey to students statewide. There are five SABES (System for Adult Basic Education Support) regional centers that correspond to the geographical regions of Massachusetts. First we contacted all five SABES Regional Coordinators for names of programs and teachers that might be interested in our project. When we called these programs, everyone enthusiastically agreed to administer and collect the surveys. We sent each program an instruction sheet, self-addressed & stamped envelopes and the number of surveys they requested. We sent approximately 800 surveys to about 30 programs throughout Massachusetts, including ABE, GED, ESOL (English Speakers of Other Languages), one on one tutoring, homeless education, corrections education, etc.

We were surprised by the tremendous response of 642 completed surveys. We think we had such a high rate of return because: 1) we asked that surveys be completed in May or June, a natural period of reflection or evaluation for programs, 2) we sent surveys only to programs that agreed to fill out the survey, and 3) students developed the content of the survey. An unanticipated outcome was that programs asked to keep the survey for a future evaluation tool. Overall, the distribution process of the surveys ran smoothly and was relatively low cost for a statewide project.

We have hired a graduate student to compile the data and assist in the analysis. We plan to gather the original five students and discuss their reactions to this data.

Personal Reflections

I was motivated to work on this project because I want to influence the legislature and policymakers about how important adult basic education is and why government should continue to fund and support its efforts. Although we do this through many other venues such as MCAE (Massachusetts Coalition for Adult Basic Education), NLA (National Literacy Advocacy List), and student and practitioner letter-writing campaigns, etc., I thought another student perspective was needed. I realized that the *student voice* is most effective for this audience, as we have seen in the past campaign. I also liked the idea of this project because it uses an empirical research approach to collect and analyze the data. I thought this would validate the student voice in a powerful way and complement the other student initiatives. Upon reflecting about this project, I realize how much effort and thought is needed to get a student perspective. It doesn't just come naturally. One has to make a conscious decision to include students in all steps of the process and in meaningful ways. For example, when designing the survey, we could have made our own assumptions about what questions should look like. Instead we made a conscious effort to have students develop the questions.

It is my hope that our example of bringing the student voice to the forefront will inspire others to incorporate the student perspective in everyday work, whether as a teacher, counselor, director, or administrator. Does the authentic student perspective mean getting students to write in a journal, attend a meeting about program planning, or fill out a student survey?

Ultimately, answering the question entails asking the students what they think and then listening to their ideas.

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Feedback 101:

Implementing Authentic Assessment: One Program's Perspective

by
Caroline Gear

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The term authentic assessment is a very broad term and its interpretation varies from program to program. Feedback and evaluation are important components of authentic assessment.

The International Language Institute of MA, Inc. (ILI) includes oral feedback and written weekly, mid-term and final evaluations as part of its tools to measure learner progress and satisfaction with the program. ILI has used this type of assessment since it began in 1984. The school has found that listening to what our learners have to say about their progress and their program ensures that they have input into the curriculum, that our program is meeting our learners' different needs/goals and that overall program quality is consistently being challenged to improve.

Where do you start if you're thinking about incorporating authentic assessment in your program? This article looks at how one school uses authentic assessment and suggests ways to make it more accessible, and hopefully more successful, for programs and teachers.

One Example: Oral Feedback

When teachers and programs consider using authentic assessment, they should first focus on the theoretical background of authentic assessment. We need to understand why we are asking learners about their satisfaction with the class and their progress before we go into the classroom armed with assessment tools. Reading and discussing articles, talking to people in the field who are already working with authentic assessment, and analyzing the variety of assessment tools available provides time for processing and internalizing the idea of authentic assessment. It also allows time for teachers to find/create tools that are appropriate to use with their learners.

Once teachers have a philosophical background in authentic assessment, they can start doing one type of authentic assessment called oral feedback. Asking learners about their progress and satisfaction with the program enables learners to begin thinking about how they learn and what works best for them. It also puts the responsibility on the learners to ensure that the program is meeting their needs. Daily oral feedback, sometimes after specific activities, usually at the end of class, is essential and has to be consistent. Oral feedback also needs to happen at the end of each week so learners can reflect on what they learned in the past week and what they need to focus on in the coming weeks.

Feeling comfortable about doing oral feedback with learners is not always an easy task. At the beginning there usually seems to be resistance by both teachers and learners. Teachers are uneasy about being put into a vulnerable position and learners question why a teacher is asking them about what they think of the class.

A teacher new to authentic assessment had attended a workshop at ILI on authentic assessment and decided to try oral feedback in her class the next week. She said that the first three days she felt resistance from the students and wanted to give up. Her class was going well, and the students weren't forthcoming with suggestions for improving the class. But she decided to continue doing oral feedback and was surprised to find that as time went on, students began to talk more about their progress and what they liked and disliked about the class.

Learners need to feel comfortable talking about the class, and they shouldn't feel like they are attacking the teacher if they do not like a particular activity. Teachers need to depersonalize the feedback sessions so that learners evaluate the actual class activities rather than the teacher. Once this routine is established, learners will feel more comfortable with giving feedback and move from "everything is fine" to "I would like to see....in the class."

One way to depersonalize feedback is to elicit from the learners a list of the class activities and record the list on the board. This gives the feedback session structure by allowing learners to talk about what was covered in the class before assessing the activities. Once the list is created, the teacher asks the learners to rate each activity according to enjoyment and value. A learner may have liked an activity, but doesn't feel that it helped them in the process of learning English. At ILI the rating system is done on a 1-5 numerical system: 1 being of little value or enjoyment and 5 being of high value or enjoyment. A learner can therefore rate an activity with a 5 for enjoyment and a 1 for value

There are a number of ways that this activity can be conducted. It also depends on the level of the class. Beginning students can rate the activities based on a happy/unhappy face system, while advanced beginning and intermediate level learners can work in pairs and then present their ratings to another pair. Pair work also seems to help in the process of depersonalizing the activity.

Instead of asking learners to rate activities, teachers can also ask specific questions about an activity: What do you think about this activity? What did you learn from this activity? Would you like to see this activity again? This puts emphasis on the activity rather than the instructor. A teacher new to feedback asked her learners: "Did you enjoy the song that I chose?" The way this question is termed does not allow the learners to respond honestly and reflect on what they got out of the activity

As teachers, we become very close to the activities that we choose, and at times we find it difficult to step back and look at the activity without becoming emotionally involved.

As teachers, we become very close to the activities that we choose, and at times we find it difficult to step back and look at the activity without becoming emotionally involved. One teacher had spent a long time preparing a particular activity. When it didn't go well, the teacher was disappointed. She felt that the activity wasn't successful because the students hadn't come to class prepared. When asked if she had done feedback, the teacher's response was that "she didn't have time." If she had done feedback, she might have found a different reason as to why the activity didn't go well. If we rely on feedback to help plan for future classes and to improve our teaching, we need to make time for feedback. Feedback is especially important after activities that don't go well.

If teachers elicit comments from learners about the class, they should use the learners' suggestions in the following classes. This validates the feedback sessions and makes it more meaningful for the learner.

Incorporating Authentic Assessment

ILI has found that if teachers are to be successful with authentic assessment they must go through the following stages:

- Teacher is exposed to theoretical background of authentic assessment and the idea of eliciting feedback from learners
- Teacher practices oral feedback using a structured activity of having learners list the activities and rate them
- Teacher adapts process according to teacher style and learner needs
- Teacher feels "ownership" with oral feedback and is ready to go to the next step of authentic assessment

All stages should include time for reflection. The process takes time and the stages may occur at different rates with different teachers. As teachers become more comfortable with the process, learners also become more comfortable with the idea of talking about their progress and what they want in the program. ILI has found that as both learners and teachers become comfortable with oral feedback they seem to move into the area of written assessment and evaluation more easily. The consistency of talking about one's progress seems to ease the transition to writing about one's progress.

ILI has found that as both learners and teachers become comfortable with oral feedback they seem to move into the area of written assessment and evaluation more easily.

The following are some ideas that may make the process of adapting authentic assessment in your program a little easier.

Do's and Don'ts

- Do provide readings about authentic assessment and provide time at staff meetings for people to discuss the pro's and con's of articles. Every program should have all volumes of *Adventures in Assessment* as it is an easy way to have a large collection of articles and tools to peruse.
- Do get a copy of the Tool Kit* and look at other tools that have been created in the field. Analyze tools to see if they could work in your program. Could you use this tool as is or would you have to adapt it? Does it make sense for you?
- Don't expect that everyone is going to be as excited about authentic assessment as you are and embrace it immediately.
- Do contact people involved in authentic assessment to come talk with your program.
- Do try to observe people using authentic assessment tools before you try it on your own.
- Don't start authentic assessment by using lengthy assessment tools. Start off by doing something like oral feedback in the class.
- Do focus on depersonalizing the assessment process. Learners should be commenting about the activity rather than whether they like the teacher.
- Do be prepared to spend more time

than you thought in getting authentic assessment up and running in your program.

As ILI enters its second decade and looks back at all the written assessment tools that it has used, it appears that authentic assessment needs to be approached as a journey. Along the way we have created many assessment tools and discarded just as many. We also realize that there is never one assessment tool that works with all students and all teachers, and that tools to measure progress take a long time to evolve. (See *Adventures in Assessment*, Spring 1994: "Evolution of an Assessment Tool").

We know that the tools that we are using today will look different in a few years as the needs of learners change and teachers grow professionally. What we have also come to realize is that the actual tool to measure progress is important, but more important are the teachers that use the assessment tools. Teachers who are new to authentic assessment need time to be exposed to and process the concept of authentic assessment. It is necessary for both learners and teachers to have the time to reflect on what is going on in the class and what direction the class/teacher/program should take.

** The Tool Kit is a resource of assessment tools put together by ABE/ESL people in Massachusetts. The Tool Kit includes intake, on-going and looking back assessment tools. It is available through SABES.*

For more information on ILI Authentic Assessment tools, see AiA, Volume 5, "Evaluation of an Assessment Tool," and Volume 7, "Adventures in Mentoring."

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Points of View

Portfolio Assessment in Rural Maine

by
Marty Duncan

Sumner Adult
Education Program
Sumner, Maine

It's early summer in East Sullivan, Maine. All of us who get through the winter here feel we earn summer. Now we can see more than the three winter colors (gray, white, sometimes blue), mud season is over, and the temperature gets above 50 degrees during the day — except in Winter Harbor where, one of my students tells me, there are only two seasons: winter and the 4th of July.

I'm driving to the Adult Learning Center (ALC). As I cross the singing bridge that separates Sullivan and the neighboring town of Hancock, I see the cormorants and gulls gathering on the rocks, a man organizing equipment on a lobster boat, and the misty water stretching into the distance from both sides of the bridge.

The ALC occupies three of the four basement rooms in the Sorrento-Sullivan Recreation Center, home of the Historical Society, the Frenchman's Bay Library, and weekly Beano games, to name only a few of the community activities. Adult Basic Education, Even Start Family Literacy, and the newly-developing Workforce Literacy components of our program operate at the Center as a part of Sumner Adult Education. Sumner runs enrichment classes, several high school diploma courses and an Interactive Television college component at Sumner Memorial High School, several miles down the road. One night a week during the fall, winter and spring an adult education class meets in a local elementary school.

I have served for the past year as the ABE Coordinator at Sumner. Currently, I teach in the ABE and family literacy programs and coordinate curriculum. In addition, I have been working for the past year and a half for the Horizon Project, a statewide regional staff development program that focuses on four areas: assessment, evaluation, research and reporting. So, my roles are many and varied. In my own program, part of the region I serve for Horizon, we have been developing portfolio assessment. In Maine, portfolio assessment is the recognized assessment in adult education as designated by the field through the state's Quality Indicators.

Because I have been involved in portfolio assessment in various ways — as a teacher, as a coordinator and as a staff development catalyst — I am interested in the various perspectives that people involved in adult education in Maine bring to the subject, especially now that we have been experimenting with portfolio for more than a year. It's the end of our regular cycles at the program (because of summer employment, most students participate in fall, winter and spring) and the Horizon Project is in its final phase. I'm in evaluation mode and I'm curious.

So, today I intend to interview eight people at Sumner Adult Ed. I will ask each of them five questions about portfolio assessment. Our operating definition is based on Hannah Fingeret's *It Belongs to Me: A Guide to Portfolio Assessment in Adult Education Programs.*

"A portfolio...can be a manila folder, an accordion folder that extends as work is added to it, a folder kept on a computer disk, or any other type of holder of information... Portfolios are collections as well as containers," Fingeret writes.

"Portfolio assessment is a process through which the portfolio is created and assessed. Students examine a larger collection of materials and choose some for their portfolios, according to a set of criteria. The portfolios are assessed for progress, examining the process of learning as well as the products. Portfolio assessment can contribute to students' sense of control over their learning when they play central roles in their portfolios' creation."

But at Sumner, and throughout the state of Maine as we develop the Quality Indicator process, portfolio assessment is not limited to the assessment of students' work. Teachers, tutors, coordinators, and directors are all responsible for assessing our work and the work of our programs.

The five questions I will ask each participant are:

1. What is your role in adult education? (Obviously, I know what their official roles are, but I'd like to know how they define them.)
2. In which ways are you using or thinking about using portfolio assessment? (Everyone is at a different stage of development with this. Some on our staff have been recently hired or have recently changed roles.)
3. What do you like about it?
4. What difficulties have you encountered or do you anticipate encountering?
5. What are your plans for developing or continuing to develop your use of portfolio assessment?

Thanks to Ann Sargent, ALC's founder who has served as Even Start Coordinator and will coordinate the Center in the coming year, this program was well-grounded in learner-centered approaches and portfolio assessment well before I entered the scene. Ann participated in the Quality Indicator process from the outset.

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As I set down my cases and unlock my office, I hear them gearing up in the room across the hall. I'm looking forward to these interviews.

The noisy activity is emanating from the learners involved in Center's Landing, the math and critical thinking skills project designed by Gail Peterson, the ABE and diploma teacher, and a group of students who were "bored with math workbooks." The students now operate the finances of several families and businesses that comprise the fictional town of Center's Landing, which is based on a downeast Maine community. They love it.

I'm about to interrupt them. I want to hear from **Nancy Austin**, a woman in her thirties who holds the distinction of being the only participant in Center's Landing to register a dissenting opinion on one of the financial decisions. She said that she would not stand by and watch the group bankrupt these people!

One of the best things I've found about it is that it's a good way to chart your progress. I see how my abilities got strengthened academically.

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NANCY: I'm a student and I went back to the learning center to learn what I didn't learn in school. I've used portfolio assessment to help me get ready to apply for a job and to show what I've learned as a student at the Center. I like it because it shows me what I have done — where I started and where I was when I got done. I had never done one before — that was the only difficulty I had. When I do more education I can put more stuff in my portfolio, what I'm planning on learning. For work, I can show my schooling, what background I have.

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The next person I'll approach is **Craig McKinley.** He was one of the group of learners who helped establish Center's Landing. He and Nancy participated in the video evaluation of the project. Craig has also participated in writing and biology classes at Sumner. His 11-year-old daughter designs posters for us.

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CRAIG: Mostly I've been a student in adult education but I trained as a volunteer tutor. I've worked as a volunteer at the Center, setting up computer programs. I also helped when they were doing needs assessment — I was kind of a guinea pig — for two special projects: HEAL and Center's Landing. HEAL [Health Education and Literacy] brought information about cancer into some of our classes and Center's Landing is a math and critical thinking project.

Allison Pinkham, another student, first explained to me what a basic portfolio is and passed around her own portfolio and gave us an idea about what we might want to put into it. (That was in English Made Easy.)

One of the best things I've found about it is that it's a good way to chart your progress. I see how my abilities got strengthened academically. It's kind of a self-history that you can present in whatever way you choose to employers or secondary education people.

I have some trouble organizing the information in a way that I think would make it easy for other people to look at it. You want to present yourself in a certain way and sometimes it's difficult to set it up like that. Trying to figure out what's pertinent and what's not is a problem even when you use it for yourself. You can get overly critical of your own things.

To me a portfolio is kind of an ongoing project, never quite finished. You're always adding information. It takes on a life of its own after awhile. It's a verbal picture of you. I plan to use it for personal, academic and job purposes.

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While the Center's Landing group is haggling over expenses, I drag **Gail Peterson** out of the classroom. Gail has taught in the ABE program for three years. She initiated Center's Landing at the learning center, organized the materials for it, piloted it, then initiated it in the group that meets at the elementary school. Gail also participated in Project HEAL, inviting learners in all of her classes to help us field test the kit of health education materials. Like Craig, she loves to talk, but she was leery of portfolio assessment at the beginning and came to it slowly.

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GAIL: I am a teacher. I teach writing, GED prep, math, biology and chemistry.

With my evening adult learning lab, a great deal of the measurement of what the students are achieving in their own minds as well as in mine comes out of the comparisons they do of early and later work that they've put in their portfolios. They are middle-aged adults so grades aren't meaningful to them. The portfolio helps them understand how they're learning. I've found with some of the much younger, still teen-age learners, just the physical act of putting together their portfolios and seeing what they've done really helped impress upon them the learning they have achieved.

When I first started in adult education I was afraid I wouldn't be able to do the job. The portfolio has helped me to see my progress and that I did have the ability. I include in my teaching portfolio information about how courses are developed, independent studies, arrangements for science laboratory courses, etc. I can see a huge change, not so much in my teaching style, but in my confidence and depth. That's made a tremendous difference to me.

For both myself and the students, I like the perspective portfolio assessment gives us on what we've accomplished. I also like the fact that the portfolio is useful outside of the school environment for employment both for students and teachers.

The time constraints in the classroom mean that portfolio doesn't always get attention when it should. I'm better now but, initially, I had a lot of trouble explaining to learners what this is and what its value could be. So a lot of the learners' initial contact with portfolio was just keeping folders and saving everything.

Next semester, I want to introduce it more concretely earlier on. I'll be using my own portfolio in class. I want to do a lot with the evening adult learning lab.

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Now that Gail's returning to the classroom, I'll pull out **Peg Walker**, one of our dedicated volunteers. She also participates in Center's Landing and helped us with the video evaluation. Another straightforward, no-nonsense type of person (maybe Maine attracts them!), she has been known to rip apart a document, loaded for bear when she scents jargon. I thought that she was more skeptical about portfolio than she turned out to be, once we began our talks about it.

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PEG: I volunteer in adult education for the fun of it. I'm a person from away (I'm from outside the community originally although I live here full time now) who brings a different perspective both in geogaphy and due to the fact that I was a special education teacher rather than a regular teacher. I would hope that this makes me able to be even more individualizing than an adult education program would expect. I don't come in and say, "This is what we do!"

I have no idea about using portfolio assessment. I don't know what I would do with it since I have no official position in education. But I think it's very uniquely practical for the person who is trying to complete his education or re-educate herself to give the view that education is supposed to be practical no matter what kind of orientation it has. I like the way it encourages students to see the things they have done.

As long as it didn't get too specific in its categories I can't imagine why portfolio would give any difficulties. If you develop a format, like a table of contents, that's fine, as long as you interpret what goes into it broadly, with some latitude.

I plan to contribute to portfolio assessment as requested by either the staff or the students in the program that I volunteer in.

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Dorothy Torrey is at the computer. She is organizing a conference on work in our communities. The ultimate networker, Dorothy has been volunteering in and around our program for at least two years. This year, she obtained a VISTA placement and now focuses on developing the workforce literacy aspects of our program. The newest member of the staff, she enthusiastically avails herself of staff development opportunities. Her perspective brings us out of the classroom:

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DOROTHY: I work as a VISTA volunteer doing workforce literacy and job development. I come from a different place than an educator. I come from a business background. I have not yet used portfolio assessment. However, I clearly see it as an excellent tool for program development and evaluation. I see evaluation as seeing clearly where we are and where we want to go.

I'm truly a novice, but what I love about portfolio assessment is that it gives the space for visioning where you want to go. Empowerment — taking learning to the next level. Even though I have not used it, I see it as valuable in establishing and building self-esteem and confidence in the learner. This is how I would want to use it — so that someone sees clearly who they are. Also, I can truly embrace evaluation as a process of developing the best possible program.

A difficulty may arise with businesses that are new to a portfolio approach. I see businesses as needing to be trained.

I need to develop a portfolio for myself so that I can understand what it's like for a learner to do that. So that I can share common experience and be able to relate to learners as well as businesses.

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I have to drive up the road because, while we're on the subject of the larger community, I'd like to hear from **Roger Woodworth**, the director of Sumner Adult Education. Roger pre-dates us all. He began developing the adult education program in this community while he was still teaching at the high school. He's been a full-time director for eight years. His relationship with the community and his foresight in allowing the development of a learning center separate from the high school have contributed enormously to the growth of the program.

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ROGER: I am the director of a public school adult education program. I have responsibility for all facets of the program: courses, staffing, publicity, budget, etc. I work directly for a school unit and am therefore responsible to the superintendent. This is a full-time, year-around adult education program having various components: general interest courses, adult basic education, high school diploma and GED, a distance education college program, and a family literacy program.

Our adult basic education and diploma programs are moving toward portfolio assessment as the assessment tool for student progress. I see it as useful for program evaluation as well.

The main thing I like about it is that the student's progress and accomplishments are not reduced to a number or letter. In the process of portfolio assessment, a student can be given credit for a variety of activities and approaches. There is tremendous flexibility in the process. It's student-centered rather than teacher-centered. It gives a better picture of the whole individual as opposed to the narrow view. It's a very useful tool in the process of examining the strengths and weaknesses of a program. It forces you to take a hard look at what you are really doing.

Resistance on the part of traditional teachers and all of us, for that matter, is a difficulty. It's far easier to teach in the traditional way than to do portfolio assessment. It's more work in general and takes longer — both in the classroom and in the program. It takes a certain amount of faith that people will learn without constant numerical evaluation. There is also some resistance on the part of students who are used to a traditional system.

I'd like to see portfolio assessment implemented at every level. It has to be bought into to be effective. Directors can't successfully decree it to happen, but I, as a director, am in favor of it and would encourage it at every opportunity.

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If I hurry, I can catch **Jan Johnson** back at the Center. She'll be returning from a home visit for family literacy, then working upstairs in the early childhood room which she designed. Jan is the Early Childhood Teacher for Even Start. Since she joined the program, she has been learning about adult education according to the Even Start model:

affecting the adult to affect the child. Recently, she showed me a large scrapbook in which she is collecting materials.

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JAN: I see my role in adult education as being experimental in the field of family literacy. Though my background is in early childhood education, I believe that the long-range changes for children also need to include or come from the parents, the family. So I work with the family as a unit in our Even Start Family Literacy Project.

At this point, I am saving samples of children's work and copies of other materials that work with families: articles, questionnaires, documentation, forms like learning logs, parents' observations of children. I am suggesting that parents save copies of the children's work to look at later.

I feel that having a way to organize the materials for future use in various ways is helpful. I feel like there's something positive about the end result. You feel positive about what you've done. You see progress. I think it makes our project feel more concrete, tangible.

When portfolio assessment is new, I think that it takes a certain mindset to remember to save materials; you need something to prompt you. Once you get into the habit, this shouldn't be a difficulty. Also, I'm not quite sure how to introduce the concept to parents, so at this point I'm asking people to save things without being completely clear about the purpose.

I hope to develop a plan with the family literacy team to introduce family portfolios. I also want, as a part of evaluation this year, to go through what I have saved and what the rest of the team has saved to examine this first attempt. I think that process will help for next year: to look at what I have collected and haven't collected will help me to save in a more organized way next year. We're looking at family portfolios, a program portfolio and a teaching portfolio. We need a system for collection and compilation.

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Downstairs, at the hub of the center, I find **Allison Pinkham**. Allison has a special place for me because she was the very first student that I worked with when I came to the adult learning center. As I've told her many times, when I first met her I didn't think we would see eye to eye. (And we didn't. I'm five feet tall and she's about 5' 10"!) Seriously, though, a teacher can sometimes sense when the person who comes to her is going to be looking for something different from what that teacher has to give. But, the night I sat and took notes while Allison talked about all that she has done in her life and began to see the ways she could use the experience, I realized that I was wrong. Her success speaks for itself. Allison now serves as the secretary and program assistant for the center. She has accompanied me on Horizon visits to other adult education programs, and has shared her thoughts and feelings.

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ALLISON: I have many roles: student, advocate for students, program assistant for family adult education. I use portfolio assessment to assess where I was and how far I've come, mistakes I've made, not made. I use it as a learning tool. I also use it to look at the program to see what could be improved: what worked and didn't.

I like the way it presents things, shows things to myself and other people on what was accomplished, things that I tried that worked or didn't work, but at least I tried. And that it belongs to me, that I can put it anywhere I want and use it however I want.

Documentation is my biggest problem with it: how to document things and finding time, organizing, finding ways to document things like: how do I document that I role-modeled for someone?

What I want to do next with portfolio is talk to other people and programs about personal or program portfolios, seeing what works for them. I think it's going to change. It's changed already over the last year or I've learned more about it, or both.

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In this local program in Maine we are continuing to learn about and experiment with portfolio assessment. We are in general agreement that it is a useful way to see concretely what we've done and that this is especially important for people whose achievements have gone unrecognized or whose work has not been valued. We also see that, with portfolio, a partnership in learning can develop. Learner and teacher roles are revised. The fact that learners teach and teachers learn becomes clearer and informs each new learning experience.

The way we view our roles and experience changes, too. Is it a fragmented job history or a collection of varied and valuable experience? Is it a record of learning deficits or a combination of unappreciated strengths and skills to be developed? Am I an instructor, worker, adult student, teacher, mother, mentor, learner, volunteer, brother, secretary? How do my roles fit together and how do I understand my experience and communicate it to others? Portfolio can begin with the pieces of this puzzle and reveal ways to put it together.

In my own experience as a teacher, I've found that portfolio offers validation for and ways to document the teaching and learning approaches that I have used for years. The most difficult aspect in my teaching right now is communication about criteria for assessment. Many (not all) people hesitate to assess their own learning and some resist it fiercely. We are all trained to accept assessment from others and through tests, rather than using a variety of assessment approaches in partnership with peers, mentors and teachers. The same kind of difficulty surfaces in the Horizon work. It is ongoing work to break the structures to allow portfolio assessment to flourish. My plan, like the plans of the people I have interviewed, is to continue learning — on my own and with others.

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What Counts? A Report to the Frameworks Committee

BRAT: Boston Region Math Teachers Explore Assessment

by
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In November, 1993, several Boston area math teachers met in a pub and agreed to use assessment as a way to focus our interest in and discussions of math.

This happy hour group included adult educators from community-based programs serving the usual variety of speakers of other languages: low, intermediate, and advanced readers, work force and GED-bound students, as well as students seeking high school diplomas through external and alternative diploma programs.

Taking our cue from the statewide ABE math team, we agreed to do math at every meeting (hence we moved to the comfortable classrooms at the Community Learning Center of Cambridge). Over the course of a year and a half, we found common ground—especially on what we thought was important to assess. A stumbling block continued to be whether to focus on initial, ongoing, or final assessment. Although the question of whether to develop something or write something as a group came up frequently, we opted to meet and talk until the formation of study groups on the draft of the math frameworks provided the impetus for us to document our thoughts.

The members of this group included Esther Leonelli and Linda Huntington, Juliet Parry, Tom Glannon, Janice Forcellese, Tom Macdonald, and Kathleen O'Connell and the three authors.

Assessment is important to us because many of us have changed our classes according to the suggestions originally published in their standards of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. The main ideas form the basis for the Massachusetts ABE Math Standards and for the frameworks for teaching mathematics which the Massachusetts Department of Education has sponsored. All these documents emphasize making connections to real life, promoting problem solving, and communication in the classroom.

What to assess?

These are the ways in which we want to assess students' mathematical abilities and growth. Many test measurements evaluate students solely based on their ability to come up with the right answer. As teachers, we would like an assessment to give us information on:

Accuracy
Logical estimating skills
Application of accurate computer skills

Communication strategies,
awareness of alternatives
Ability to verbalize at the beginning,
middle, and end

Strategy repertoire
Approach to the problem
Method to complete the problem

Motivation in other areas
Motivation vs. frustration level
Ability to start again

Information/Organization
Ability to assess where they are

Use of tools
Use of strengths

As a group we brainstormed this list. In retrospect, Tom, Paula, and Martha grouped the items and agreed to a loose labeling of them: *Skills, Communication, Strategy, Affect/Attitude* (this encompasses motivation, frustration, and willingness to start again), and *Tools*. Below the three of us compiled the group's notes on the assessment activities. For each one, you will find an assessment purpose, a description, process suggestions, timing, and "when we did it." Under assessment purpose, you will find references to the above labels. Note that many activities can play more than one role, depending on the purpose and curriculum. For example, the same activity could assess Communication and Skills, depending on the context.

In some instances, teachers used the assessments in class. If that happened, we have recorded what we remember of our own and our students' reactions. Because our interests broke down along student population and timing of the assessment, we didn't all have a reason or an interest in trying each assessment instrument or activity. Nevertheless, during our sessions, we were open to trying anything and discussing whatever was tried. What follows are the activities we found.

1. Mindbenders

Assessment Purpose: Some of us felt that Mindbenders and other logic puzzles could help us assess a student's reasoning process. In general, they are calisthenics for the *mind*. They can help students identify thinking skills, especially process of elimination and deduction from what is *not* known. Use Mindbenders and similar puzzles to assess Communication, Strategy, and Affect/Attitude.

Description: The Mindbenders we used are from Anita Harnadek's book of the same name published by Critical Thinking Press (Pacific Grove, CA, 1979). The series has many levels. The warm-ups are good, but we used some that were a little higher level, A-1, I believe. The puzzles ask students to determine, for example, which name goes with which profession based on certain clues.

Process Suggestions: If students are successful at completing a puzzle, ask them to write down the process they used. What were the steps in their thinking?

Timing: You could use logic puzzles at the beginning and at intermittent points in class to monitor students' reasoning processes. However, such a problem on an initial intake might intimidate students.

When we did it: At least one teacher said she didn't like them and another questioned their relevance to assessment. She also noted that rarely in life are such problems presented. In our own problem solving, we noticed that there might not be a clear, deductive process, but rather a risk taken to pursue a solution and then a decision to call it solved, check it or take a different tack.

2. Ducks and Lambs

Assessment Purpose: A problem to study the students' process of solution. This type of problem would be a good on-going assessment tool in class. Perhaps a form or set of steps would enable students to write and analyze their own progress. This would be valuable for the student and lessen the burden of the teacher.

Description: The problem was stated and the group was asked to solve the problem with a partner. Farmer Brown decided to take an inventory of her animals. She started by counting their heads, 45 heads. Next she counted legs and tallied 100 legs. How many lambs and how many ducks did Farmer Brown have?

Process Suggestions: The time frame we used was less than an hour. The group agreed that it was an excellent activity and that it could be solved in various ways. The different perspectives presented were useful insights. There was not a formal assessment structure. Everyone was left to their own devices. Make sure the students are encouraged to share the way they came to their answers.

Timing: The time we took for the problem was less than an hour, but for different groups it could vary. This would be a great on-going or final problem to use if the curriculum already had a lot of open-ended problems.

When We Did It: Algebra was mainly used, but we discussed a variety of ways in which the problem could be solved. A question is posed: would students be stimulated to learn algebra if their method took a long time? Another concern was for the teacher evaluating the process. All in all it would be good for observing strategies and assessing motivation.

3. Computer "Math Blasters"

Assessment Purpose: This is a software program that gave an entirely different process of working with math. The software presentation is entertaining. It builds a student's number sense and operation sense in a visual format. The player can start out with a trial and error process and advance to more sophisticated techniques to solve problems. The assessment is built in and is immediate. Drill is acquired through an entertaining formal.

Description: Math Blaster is a computer software program. It is a well-designed program that challenges the student level by level to increase their understanding of numbers and their relationships. If the students' computational skills are low, a calculator is provided on screen. The software program provides a wide range of challenge and keeps score for the users in chart form and gives praise.

Timing: This would be a good on-going activity. It would give freedom to students to work at their own level. The final assessment would give an idea of the students' ability.

When We Did It: Observing the computer program for the first time was a treat and was fascinating to use. Hands-on use of the program gave an understanding of the processes it makes you use to find a solution. It demands accuracy, makes you think of logical estimates, and practices computer skills. You definitely build strategies in the approach to the problem and solution.

4. Math Town and Playground

Assessment Purpose: Math Town and Playground offer participants the opportunity to use divergent reasoning and to determine and follow much of their own criteria. There are any number of correct answers so it simulates many real life math applications where there is not a single unique correct answer. Participants use their own values and problem-solving strategies and have the chance to be creative in this open-ended investigation. Use these problems to assess communication, strategies, and tools.

Description: Participants in pairs or groups of three are given a large blueprint of a town with large open spaces. They are told to designate sites for certain features such as a park and they are to meet criteria for their placement in relation to other features in the town. It leaves room for creativity and an expression of the groups' preferences for the design.

Timing: It would make a good ongoing or final assessment device.

Process suggestions: Assessors should plan ahead what they want to assess. Participants could be given some guidance since it is very easy to get bogged down in the details and miss the larger picture. For example, discussions of the exact dimensions of a basketball court or the kinds of flowers to put in the border could distract students from thinking about the design of the playground overall.

When we did it: Some of us played the role of participant and worked in pairs while others observed. It was quite challenging and different groups expressed very different priorities in their design. Some observers/assessors were not certain what they were looking for.

One teacher reported that "I did this in class. I really wanted more of them. The students found them most useful. They thought it would be easy and didn't expect to think. I found myself observing their thinking and organizing skills."

In debriefing, we noted that the assignment draws on participants' background knowledge. The questions are not necessarily free of bias, but they do level the playing field by drawing on many different kinds of experiences, e.g., knowing about basketball, getting around town, experience with children of different ages.

The questions are not necessarily free of bias, but they do level the playing field by drawing on many different kinds of experiences, e.g., knowing about basketball, getting around town, experience with children of different ages.

5. ETS, Quantitative/Document Tests

Assessment Purpose: These tests would have to be used in the proper environment for standardized results. They may be very good for ESOL students with GEDs to evaluate their knowledge of English, using forms and testing their graphic literacy life skills. Two of the teachers were considering this test as a possible replacement or companion to the diagnostic test Cambridge currently uses to screen entrants to the External or Adult Diploma Program.

Descriptions: The ETS Tests or Applied Literacy Skills Document Literacy and Quantitative Literacy (a set of two), would definitely test skills people would need in the real world. The answers are short, there is no multiple choice, and tsome basic math is involved.

Process Suggestions: We did not have a key or a table to score these tests. No "norms" were available. The test was too straightforward for native English speaking high school graduates or GED graduates.

Timing: These tests are structured with an amount of time for each section. A potential innovative way to use the test would be to give them as an initial assessment and then re-use them for final assessment.

When We Did It: Most of the information and questioning was straightforward, but some students said they were confused about some of the map-reading questions.

6. Seven Kinds of Smart

Assessment Purpose: To see if we could assess our own areas of "smart." We have all been frustrated by diagnostics that don't help us get to know our students better. Use this inventory to assess whether students work more efficiently in groups or alone and take in information visually or kinesthetically, and to share information about students' strengths with them.

Description: Seven Kinds of Smart is a book that delineates multiple intelligences and makes suggestions for how to improve your 'smarts' in each area. The author offers a seven-part inventory that could be given as a whole or given a part at a time. The seven kinds of smart include: linguistic, musical, logical/mathematical, spatial/visual, bodily/kinesthetic, intrapersonal, and interpersonal. If you are dissatisfied with IQ that measures intelligence along one axis, you will find the inventory and its scoring elegant and empowering.

Process Suggestions: One teacher suggested that different stations be set up with an activity or activities that relate to an area. Students would move around the room, try out different activities and monitor their own strengths and attitudes. We agreed that a disadvantage of this idea would be the teacher's limited ability to observe everything. In addition, students would need preparation for the discussion to follow. Having the vocabulary to describe their reactions to the different stations would be crucial.

Timing: The inventory could be used at the beginning of class or at a middle point. Its use to the classroom teacher would be non-existent if done at the end.

When we did it: Enthusiasm was very high. We learned a lot about each other. We noted that as teachers we would be disposed to teach in the ways that are compatible with our strengths. How can we compensate if our students are musically inclined and we are not?

We brainstormed ways to address each area within the context of math. A summary follows:

Musical: Times table raps
Spatial/visual: graphic representations
Kinesthetic: handling manipulatives
Linguistic: making up word problems
Logical/mathematic: brainteasers, almost anything!
Intrapersonal: math journal
Interpersonal: collaborative problem solving, e.g. problems from *SPACES*.

7. Tactile Math

Assessment Purpose: Spending time on tactile activities was inspired in part by the *Seven Kinds of Smart* discussion. The original intent, however, was to identify mathematical strengths in a visually-impaired student, particularly those not uncovered by traditional assessment. Soon it became obvious that counting change was a challenging activity for those temporarily deprived of their sight. Use this activity to observe student's organization, accuracy, and other skills, and possible communication strategies.

Description: The participant is asked to blindfold himself or herself and to count up a set quantity of change. Simple as it sounds, many different abilities are required to accomplish this task. The participant has to keep the piles of coins separate and be able to locate them. Finally, s/he has to use mental math to count up the change.

Process Suggestions: The participant should first try to feel the difference between coins while looking at them, noting if the sides of the coins are rough or smooth. The participant should be given three or four coins to start out with and work up to larger numbers as s/he becomes proficient. If participants are struggling, some coaching is appropriate.

Timing: This would not make a good initial assessment. The participant should be fairly comfortable with creative teaching and ready for a new challenge.

When we did it: One teacher had thought about the activity prior to doing it and did the task methodically and seemingly effortlessly. It came as a surprise after having watched so many other participants struggle. This might be useful in finding hidden aptitudes that might otherwise go unnoticed.

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Book Review

Family Literacy Successes

Sylvie O'Donnell

Nantucket
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Assessing Success in Family Literacy Projects: Alternative Approaches to Assessment and Evaluation. Daniel D. Holt, Editor. Center for Applied Linguistics and Delt Systems Co., Inc., 1994.

As literacy programs adapt to serve the real life needs of adult learners, testing must be similarly adapted to meet program needs. *Assessing Success in Family Literacy Projects* offers guidelines for supplementing standardized testing with valid measures of useful information relevant to your program design.

The chapters are sequenced to follow the order in which assessment strategies might be used in a start up program: selecting members for the planning team, assessing needs, designing the project, assessing progress, reporting and using results. In following the steps, you will have designed a viable project to meet the needs of your learners, teachers and funders. Your learners will be involved in establishing goals; teachers will have feedback to help direct the educational process. You will have measurable goals and objectives for giving recognition of progress to learners and documentation of achievements for funders.

Chapter 1 includes a comparison of standardized and alternative approaches to assessment. If you choose alternative approaches, the content of your tests will relate to the goals and curriculum of your project. Keeping measurement in mind as you state your goals and objectives helps clarify the purpose and the definition of literacy for your particular program. Chapter V is especially helpful for its emphasis on the technical aspects of collecting and analyzing data, and reporting alternative assessment results. Included are examples of tools that have proven useful for obtaining information through surveys, performance samples, interviews and observation. Also addressed are issues of reliability and validity in evaluation design.

While the authors' focus "on programs serving language-minority adults and families, many suggestions could also be used in literacy programs for monolingual English speakers *(page 124).*" The model approaches used in developing the hand-book are well illustrated in Chapter IV.

Lots of encouragement and practical advice is presented in detail in this brief handbook. The information provided is derived from the experience of participants in family literacy projects, both learners and staff. The book is clearly written. The contents are carefully outlined, making it easy to locate information you most want to review.

The book should prove very useful as we create sound alternative approaches to improving assessment, evaluation and instruction in our family literacy programs.

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Book Review

Whole Language for Adults

Whole Language for Adults; Guide to Instruction. Chetham, J., Clarke, M., McKay, D., Schneider, M., Dunn-Siedow, M. New Readers Press 1994. **Guide to Portfolio Assessment:** MacKillop, Jane . New Readers Press 1994. **Guide to Initial Assessment:** MacKillop, Jane. New Readers Press, 1994. **Guide to Administration and Staff Development;** MacKillop, Jane. Nre Readers Press, 1995.

W**hole Language for Adults** is a comprehensive resource for programs interested in assessing their practice to date, reflecting on their needs and goals, and implementing authentic teaching, learning and assessment. A strength of this four-volume guide is the consideration given to issues of administration and staff development in addition to instruction and assessment. The authors recognize that a whole language program requires support and participation on all levels. They devote a good deal of attention to the role which administrators must play in constructing a program with learners, teachers, community members and funders so that all stakeholders are invested in the process.

The authors wisely suggest that a program must first consider what is already in place which works well and which meets the needs of the program before it makes sweeping changes. Program staff are then encouraged to reflect on their goals for the program and how they can best be met. This process then drives the creation of assessment tools and instructional materials.

This is the other major strength of the guides. Although copy-ready tools are provided, with examples of how each item is actually used in a class or program, the questions which accompany each assessment or instructional item are most valuable. They encourage practitioners to reflect on their teaching and learning environment and to adopt or adapt materials and practices which are best suited to their philosophies and goals.

Initial Assessment

The authors address authentic assessment in two separate volumes. One is devoted to initial assessment and the other to portfolio assessment.

The guide to initial assessment is accompanied by a collection of reading selections used to evaluate oral communication, reading, and writing proficiency. They recommend the informal reading inventory and auxiliary assessment measures be used in place of standardized tests. The authors also illustrate how the information gained can be useful when reporting on some of the indicators of program quality now required for federal and state funding.

This guide stresses the need for integrating assessment, instruction, and

Eileen Barry

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program design and therefore begins with very basic information about recruiting, planning and intake strategies. When developing initial assessment tasks, educators are encouraged to envision " genuine communication tasks" so that assessment becomes an integral component of curriculum development, teaching, and learning. "(R)ather than trying to hide difficulties, the learner becomes a partner in exploring needs, skills and goals." This take on assessment focuses on strengths and recognizes that literacy and communication involve much more than reading and writing in workbooks.

In the section dealing with intake interviews, the authors explain the questions included in the intake process. This is more useful than the actual interview form, as it models the process of developing a questionnaire which meets the specific needs of program staff. The danger of compiling such a comprehensive and detailed volume is that programs may adopt the interview protocols without considering their own specific needs. For those who are just beginning to use alternative assessment, however, this may provide a solid foundation.

A major component of the initial assessment is an informal reading inventory (IRI) comprised of stories written by adult learners and teachers. New students are encouraged to choose a passage to read which is challenging but not discouraging. The authors have ranked the stories according to readability based on the Fry formula. Although this was probably an effort to satisfy funders, assigning elementary grade levels to stories intended for adults does not seem very useful, especially since the authors acknowledge that familiarity with content and the writing style of the author will have a strong impact on the reader's comprehension of the story.

I also had trouble with some of the subject matter of the stories. The authors claim that the selections were chosen to reflect situations in learner's lives; while many are inspirational, I found the stories about life on welfare and in prisons stereotypical. Auxiliary assessment materials are provided to "examine aspects of reading." These exercises are incongruous with the whole language philosophy, however, for words are presented out of context in meaningless lists.

Portfolio Assessment

The portfolio assessment planning guide encourages practitioners to ask questions about their purposes and goals before choosing from a variety of portfolio approaches. Portfolios are recommended as a recognition of the connection between teaching, learning, and assessing. The authors argue that the use of portfolios not only promotes a learner-centered approach to teaching and learning but also offers valuable documentation of the work done in classes, homes, communities and workplaces not reflected in standardized assessments. The authors also suggest that assessment lends itself to practitioner inquiry as teachers reflect on their students progress. Again, this observation recognizes that program staff need not rely upon standardized test results, but can draw on their own professional knowledge to ask and answer important questions about teaching and learning.

Administration and Staff Development

The authors' commitment to practitioner research is unclear, however. While they recommend that teachers keep their own portfolios, this is not regarded as a viable means of self evaluation and professional development. Instead, the authors emphasize workshops and training for staff development and teacher evaluation. A great deal of attention is placed on administrators observing teachers while the use of critical reflection on one's own practice and dialogue with peers is not considered. Also, the use of portfolios for program evaluation and reporting is not addressed.

The authors do recognize that learners, teachers, and community members, as well as funders, must have a voice in the design and implementation of a program and therefore stress the importance of advisory councils. This holistic approach to teaching, learning, administering, and assessing is the strength of the guides.

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AN INVITATION TO WRITE

Adventures in Assessment accepts articles regarding any of the three components of assessment: *Getting Started, Ongoing,* and *Looking Back,* or our other departments: *What Counts?, Voices from the Field, Learning from Experience,* and *Publication Reviews.*

If you would like to submit an article to ***Adventures in Assessment,*** please contact us at:

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The next issue of ***Adventures in Assessment*** will come out in Fall 1996 and will highlight writings from workplace education programs and low level literacy assessment tools.

We welcome your input and feedback. To be included in the Fall 1996 ***Adventures in Assessment,*** please contact Alison Simmons at the above address.

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System for Adult Basic Education Support

World Education
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adventures in ASSESSMENT

Learner-centered
approaches
to assessment &
evaluation
in adult literacy

Volume 9

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Learner-centered approaches to assessment & evaluation in adult literacy

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Introduction

Rethinking Assessment: Students and Teachers Assess All the Time

by
Alison Simmons

Editor
SABES Central
Resource Center/
World Education

In the previous volume of *Adventures in Assessment* I posed the question "How will [I] measure the progress of my students so it is meaningful to them, informs instruction and curriculum and satisfies funders?"

Through my work in assessment over the year and working with authors on this volume of *Adventures in Assessment*, I have had a chance to rethink this question and what it means for me in my work as editor of this journal. What I found confirmed a belief I have held since I was an ESOL teacher. Assessment is done all the time by students and teachers. Teachers assess students initially for placement, to get a sense of their purpose for studying, and for their skill level.

On an ongoing basis teachers assess students to track progress and make decisions on movement to other levels or to redefine goals as needed as students' lives change and their goals are accomplished. Finally, when students are finished with our services, teachers assess them to record achievement and indicate where their skills are now.

Teachers use a variety of ways to accomplish these tasks: observation, feedback sessions, portfolios and standardized tests. For many teachers, assessment is integrated into their instruction.

Students self assess all the time. They seek and receive feedback from teachers, community members, co-workers, other students, etc. Most of this feedback is immediate. Non-verbal clues (looks of confusion and impatience), lack of response or inaccurate responses by the listener are indicators that there was something problematic in the interaction. A series of questions and self reflection start: what was it about this interaction that was problematic? What were the barriers preventing the listener or receiver from understanding the interaction? Was it a bias? What do I need to work on and what is out of my control? The questioning process happens all the time within the students and helps them understand the complex process of language learning and set goals accordingly.

All this information is used to adjust our teaching, learning and perceptions of our students and their abilities.

When I asked teachers how they assess their students, they offer countless anecdotes and tools and systems to move students to levels, assess whether students can understand and apply the materials, and determine the immediate needs of the students, who needs other support services, etc. Teachers have an individual system of assessment and programs have internal systems that may not translate to other audiences.

Teachers know how to measure progress but get stuck trying to find a tool or reporting mechanism to put their data in that would satisfy all the different audiences. The question goes beyond, 'how will I measure the progress of my students so it is meaningful to them, informs instruction and the curriculum and satisfies the funder?'

Rather the questions should be 'how do I report the progress I have seen to satisfy different audiences? How do I report the progress my students have seen? What information is useful to me in my program and what information do I need to satisfy other audiences? I have seen checklists, portfolios, benchmarks, standardized tools used as alternative assessment forms, videos, audio tapes, charts etc. All document learning but are not transferable to audiences outside of the program or class.

I think we need to look more closely at developing ways to report progress that captures the gains our students are making. We need to look at what teachers are doing in the classroom and students are doing and focus our technical assistance in assisting programs, teachers and students in documenting and validating their assessment tools and seeing how/if they connect with the requirements of SPL levels and other funding mandates. In the process we need to validate and encourage teachers to continue to develop systems that inform instruction and show students where they are making gains and how far they have come in achieving their goals. We need to look more closely into the causes of problematic interactions and not assume that it always lies in the hands of the students.

In this issue **Elizabeth Santiago** talks with six ESOL practitioners about their assessment practices. The practitioners come from different contexts and describe barriers they overcome to make assessment meaningful for themselves as teachers and for their learners. They struggle with meeting reporting requirements and have come up with tools and systems that work for their programs. **Janet Isserlis** talks about her experience as a volunteer in an adult education program in Canada. She looks at the roles volunteers can play in the assessment process and how a particular assessment tool worked for her and her students in a conversation class. **Olivia Steele, John Antonellis, Jane Shea, Kathe Kirkman,** and **Debra Tuler** discuss challenges and opportunities in implementing a team-based approach to planning and evaluation in workplace education programs in Massachusetts. **Michelle Brown** walks us through the evolution of her Native Language Literacy Program that was developed and implemented after a hard look at why some students were not progressing in her program. She also introduces us to the tool they developed for their Native Language Literacy Program.

In another article **Deborah Mercier-Cuenca** talks about her experience using the Native Language Literacy Screening Device as a tool for her program. What she found out through the assessment process changed the way she approached her class and she, like Michelle Brown, demonstrates student-driven curriculum by teaching English Life Skills as part of their Native Language Literacy program.

Tricia Donovan in the *What Counts?* section asks us to look a different way to assess math skills. It goes beyond assessing just computation to look at habits of mind and other skills involved in solving a math problem. **Peg Reidester** helps us look at these new ideas more concretely as she takes us through an assessment of a math problem using a rubric.

Finally, **Jeanne Kearsley** reviews an assessment package by Cathy Shank that offers beginning and experienced teachers alike a way to document students' progress.

Our next issue will be our tenth and we would like to look back a few years and see how far we have come. There are a lot of issues and questions left after this volume that we would like to take up in future volumes. There are still questions about 1) the use and misuse of the "tests," 2) reporting, and 3) barriers to efficient assessment processes. We invite you to share your ideas, successes, and questions as we learn from each other about our assessment practices.

Alison Simmons

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Assessment in the ESOL Experience

"We have what I call a chat with very basic interview questions to evaluate the student's oral and verbal capabilities. Now we have a mandatory test we have to give from the state. With the new test, I sit down and go through each question. Sometimes, if I speak their language, then I help. But fifty percent of the time they come with an interpreter. Sometimes I will ask to call a family member. Sometimes I am dry. I have nothing." **Cecil Demorney, Community Learning Center, Cambridge.**

by
Elizabeth
Santiago

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Traditionally, ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages) teachers have had to create original assessment tools to place low-level English language learners into their classrooms. Often times, standardized tests can be inappropriate for ESOL learners. Certain funding sources, however, require scores derived from tests like the BEST (Basic English Skills Test) for funding consideration and some funders ask for other documentation showing how learners have progressed. Teachers have had to "dance" with what is required (or what they perceive is required) by the funders and what they feel will help them place and move students more accurately.

How does an ESOL professional utilize what is available to them when placing beginning level students into their classrooms? How about when they are transitioning ESOL students into a higher level class, working with a multi-level class, and/or documenting each learner's progress for multiple funding sources?

In August and September of 1996, Alison Simmons and I visited four programs in Massachusetts: Hamden County House of Correction in Hamden, Lutheran Social Service in Springfield, International Institute in Boston, and the Community Learning Center in Cambridge. In those diverse settings, we talked to six ESOL professionals about how they assess low-level ESOL students and what concerns they have within that context.

BACKGROUND

ESOL services for adults have been gaining national attention in recent years mostly because more and more adults have enrolled in ESOL classes and waiting lists for services are growing. Recent controversies surrounding immigrants and English-only legislation have put a spotlight on ESOL learners. Even with the current media coverage of English language learners, there is little about ESOL assessment being documented, published, and filtered into the classroom. National organizations like TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) and individual states and programs around the country have been researching and piloting assessment tools, but it is not as well known or widespread as it should be. The *Meeting Summary on Current Research and Theory on Effective ESL Instruction* put out by the U.S. Department of Education says "The issue is not so much that outcomes do not exist, but that the ESL field has varying objectives for instruction and does not know how to measure outcomes across groups" (page 10).

In a discussion I had with the editor of *Adventures in Assessment*, I expressed the confusion and frustration I was feeling in trying to assess a young man that I had recently begun tutoring. At our first session I wanted to get a sense where I should begin instruction and what he expected from me. I knew that he had just arrived in this country and spoke little if any English. I went to the SABES library at the Central Resource Center and found a book on low-level ESOL assessment. The book used pictures and leading questions to assess. I decided to try this approach with my learner.

I thought the first few pictures might be too simple for him but I decided to follow the format of the book and asked him the word for each object in English. After three objects, he turned to a friend and interpreter and asked him to tell me in English that he found the questions too easy. What was I to do with the realization he was unable to express to me in English his concerns, but insisted what I was asking him was too easy? I learned that my issue was one of many with which classroom teachers have to deal on a daily basis.

"The issue is not so much that outcomes do not exist, but that the ESL field has varying objectives for instruction and does not know how to measure outcomes across groups."

LIMITATIONS OF AVAILABLE TESTS

In *ESL and the American Dream*, authors Chisman, Wrigley, and Ewen state, "There are no standardized tests on the market that can adequately measure the proficiency of the great diversity of adults who need ESL service. This is no surprise given the complexity of language skills and the range of abilities that adult learners demonstrate. Yet funders continue to insist that standardized assessments be used to judge learner progress, and may use such measures of program effectiveness as well. This is true in spite of the fact that the most commonly used standardized tests have severe limitations" (page 58).

What are some tests currently in use by ESOL teachers and what are their limitations? There are both ABE (Adult Basic Education) and ESOL tests. ABE tests include: Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE), the Adult Basic Learning Examination (ABLE), and the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS). These tests may be used with ESOL learners, but have obvious limitations because they were not designed for that population. There are tests specifically designed for the ESOL learner which may or may not be more appropriate. The most popular of these tests include the BEST test, the Comprehensive English Language Skills Assessment (CELSA), and the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL).

The BEST test assesses a learner's basic survival skills such as listening comprehension, conversational ability, and literacy for placement purposes. In many settings, the BEST test is required by funders as a means for assessing learners on an ongoing basis as well as for initial and final assessment. In my discussion with the six teachers, each agreed the BEST was one of the better initial placement tools for their students.

On the other hand, teachers complained that students were able to memorize the items when the test is re-administered, therefore making it difficult to tell what knowledge a learner has actually acquired. Another criticism of using the test as an ongoing assessment tool is the idea that you have to teach to the test. "Sometimes if you don't teach to the test, the students aren't going to pass and move on to the next level," said Lola Reid at Lutheran Social Settlement Services.

The CELSA assesses how well an English learner can deal with written English tests representing varying levels of difficulty. "The CELSA is useful inasmuch as it provides some indication on the language proficiency level of ESL students… however, it does not tell programs and funders if students can use English to achieve their own purposes in a variety of situations. Therefore, it has only limited use as an ESL proficiency assessment," wrote Chisman, Wrigley, Ewen in *ESL and the American Dream.*

The TOEFL is the most comprehensive of the available standardized ESOL tests. TOEFL scores are used for admission and placement into thousands of colleges and universities across the nation. But the test's purpose is narrow, as suggested above, and not broad enough to use with all of our learners.

To organize my conversations with the six ESOL teachers, I categorized the discussions following the three stages of assessment. The categories are initial, ongoing, and final assessment.

INITIAL ASSESSMENT

"I use the Oral BEST test. If they pass, I move to the written BEST. I also ask lots of questions, but nothing personal. I will not ask what they have done to get here. I don't need to know that information. I also use Scrabble letters to make words in their native language. If they use an alphabet which is different than the English language, I will use pictures to assess. If their skills are very limited, I will try to interpret myself or ask another student to interpret." *Eileen Witkop, Hamden County House of Correction*

"I have an informal oral interview so I can gauge their level. After that, there is an application tool with ten sequenced personal questions. I see how they respond and it helps me select which reading sample to give them. I have them read the sample silently and then out loud. There are three or four comprehension questions. Then there is a writing sample. I ask them to write about their family or something else familiar. People usually get nervous about spelling so I tell them up front that's not what I'm looking for now, but how they can write their ideas. We also have an assessment of basic math skills, but applicants often opt out of this saying they want reading and writing." *Leona Breslow, International Institute*

"If I ask their birth date, for example, I will sing, 'happy birthday to you, happy birthday to you...' Most people know the tune so they give me the answer." *Cecil Demourney*

Many teachers have various initial assessment tools they use with their students, but there is not one tool which all the teachers follow. Usually, if a teacher uses a particular test to satisfy their funders, they also come up with some program-based alternative form of assessment to use for themselves. "Our students come in at all levels from 0-above. The BEST test is used to determine the initial level of a student. The numbers generated from the BEST test are the numbers acceptable by the funding sources. We also have

"The CELSA is useful inasmuch as it provides some indication on the language proficiency level of ESL students… however, it does not tell programs and funders if students can use English to achieve their own purposes in a variety of situations. Therefore, it has only limited use as an ESL proficiency assessment,"

an informal assessment of our own once we place the students into our classrooms. We'll list the activities that we did at the end of a class. Students vote on what they like best. This helps them think about their own learning and where it is more helpful to them: reading or writing. Low-level is more tricky. They say that was good. They tend not to be too critical. If you ask them what they want to do, they look at you like, 'this is ridiculous, aren't you the teacher?'" *Lola Reid, Lutheran Social Services Settlement*

The tests also raise issues of inappropriateness where the tests are concerned. "Our students are mostly given the TABE test, but the timing is extremely bad. They are given the test, it's corrected and put on file. We can't really go by that test because it is given at the worst time. It is usually given right after someone enters the facility and at that point they are usually in a state of shock." *Eileen Witkop*

Eileen's sentiment may, at first glance, seem specific to incarcerated individuals. However, ESOL teachers at other settings have similar concerns when dealing with issues of trauma and shock. Some ESOL learners are coming from war-torn countries and may have lost family members or have endured other tragedies. Those issues may arise in all ESOL settings.

Another issue in assessing students initially and getting an accurate measure of their levels is the reality of waiting lists. Some programs test students when they sign up for classes, then place them on a waiting list until a spot opens up. This approach also has problems. "Waiting lists make it difficult to determine their initial level. Because they have been waiting for so long, their English gets better. Sometimes we have to make changes. What we decided to do was network with other community organizations in Cambridge and help them set up English classes. Waiting lists are shorter which is great." *Cecil Demourney*

Initial assessment is by far one of the most difficult areas for most ESOL teachers, but it has been one of the areas that has garnered more documentation (see previous volumes of *Adventures in Assessment*). There are also many variables associated with ongoing assessment.

ONGOING ASSESSMENT

Each teacher with whom I spoke had more ideas for ongoing assessment, but there were equally as many concerns.

"For my low-level students, I try and teach them survival skills. I take them to places like the supermarket and point out fruits and vegetables, show them how to shop, what the numbers and signs are. I show them how to look for an apartment, learn how to read the abbreviations. I talk about how to take the subway and how to deal with getting lost. We also talk about body parts and medical care. It's easier to gauge this type of knowledge through everyday observation, homework, participation in class and what the teacher perceives." *Cecil Demourney*

The teacher's perception arose over and over. How do you *know* someone is making progress?

"That has always been a question. How much learning time should I spend on assessment? Informal assessment is always in your head. One thing that has been positive for me is after a few weeks when they have a little more vocabulary, I show them a picture. They learned the who, what, when, etc. prior to this. I'll ask them, 'who is this person, what are they doing,'

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etc. I ask them to talk about it, but not to write it. At the break, I write the story they discussed and give it back to them with blanks. I would ask them more questions. I mention to them to look at all the English they learned. It's very validating." *Lola Reid*

"A lot of it is work that they do, teacher observations, class work, informal interviews, and end-of-the-cycle interviews. I will reassess students who are having trouble. We do see some students with learning issues so progress can often be slow." *Leona Breslow*

"For lower levels, I list the activities we have just finished on the board and use a happy face, a neutral face, and a frowning face as the determinant of each activity. They would vote on which they preferred. After a while, I said to myself why am *I* doing this? After that, the students went to the board and rotated the assessment. Then I tried it individually at their desks, but this was for higher levels. The lower levels always did it on the board. Then I tried an assessment sheet because I felt the exercise was taking up too much time in a predictable way. I would give them this sheet and they would bring it back at the end of the week. People didn't like it, in fact they hated it. So I redid it to show their changes. I still think they don't like it, but they like this one better.

It's helpful for me also to figure out what to do in class. Because of the new assessment sheet, we had a conversation about what constitutes reading, mainly because there is a question that asks what have you read this week. They would come back and say, 'I didn't read,' but they would have read an ad, the Yellow Pages, cooking instructions, etc. It's very easy to tell, as a teacher, whether somebody gets it or doesn't get it. It's hard to say what I do exactly, but I just know." Rebecca Schiffrin, Lutheran Settlement Services.

Teachers couldn't always pinpoint exactly how they know a learner has made progress. Each teacher was also at different levels with documentation. Some used portfolios to document learner's progress, some kept informal notebooks, and many talked about goal setting sheets they had developed. "I use portfolio assessment and goal setting sheets to tell if my students have progressed. I revisit the goals list with the students. The students get so excited when they can check something off the list. Whether it is the achievement of writing their name in cursive or watching a TV show in English, it doesn't matter because they always feel a sense of power when they check off something. I also try to establish if there is a learning disability present, but that is often difficult to determine. I am building a kit that is appropriate to ESL learners which might help me see if there is a learning disability." *Eileen Witkop*

"I started doing some portfolio assessment. I would put job applications and other accomplishments in it. It doesn't look the same for each student because of absences. Sometimes I sit with students and go over what they have done over the last few months." *Barbara Lippel Paul, Lutheran Social Service, Springfield*

Some teachers use technology in their on-going assessment tools. "Upon completion of a basic skills/computer class, we did on-line classroom assessment. I prepared a disk for each student. On each disk was a written evaluation the student would respond to. I would have leading questions at the bottom *(see attached tool)*. The students loved it and you can see

Assessment of learners in workplace education has always been challenging. An important reason is that no standardized tests are available that measure the learning gains at which workplace education programs aim.

learning styles come out behind the computer. It was also a learning experience for me and I was able to modify as I went along. I let them go at their own pace. Computer class was directly affected by what went on in class. I keep a folder with a written evaluation. I also put in writing assignments and other evaluation materials." *Leona Breslow*

The pattern in these interviews seemed to be that there isn't one way to do assessment and there is a level of intuition on the part of the teacher. Barbara Lippel Paul stated, "You're doing ongoing assessment all along in your class. Everything is to get them out the door to the next level, or job, etc. We are constantly assessing." The next section will discuss that very thing: How do you know when a student is ready for the next level or job or whatever?

FINAL ASSESSMENT

"I always hear when a student wants to go to a lower level, but rarely will a student tell me they want to go to a higher level. When I suspect someone can go into a higher level, I tell them and they are rarely surprised. They sort of already know they are ready to move on." *Leona Breslow*

Knowing when a student is ready to move to another level, whatever that level may be, takes on many forms. Some teachers have informal interviews with each student at the end of a class cycle while some mentioned checklists.

"Some students like to stay in the same level because they know everyone. Some others want to move when they are not ready. Now, we are trying to work harder on more assessment tools. It's challenging. We have a curriculum for each level, but we don't follow it blindly. We do what's best for the group. We make sure the students master some grammar because we base judgement of level changes on grammar. The problem that comes up is different levels. It's always a multi-level class. Some may be better in writing than in reading. You try to take that into consideration when you are planning your lesson. You try to work on the primary skills. Sometimes you have a student with real literacy problems so you have to be more creative. At the end of a cycle, we are asked to send a list to the counselors of people who are ready to move. It's tough though. For ABE there are standardized tests. For ESL there really isn't anything." *Cecil Demourney*

Cecil's sentiment sums up a frustration these ESOL professionals continue to feel. What can we make of all this? Well, Barbara, Lola, Rebecca, Eileen, Cecil, and Leona shared with us their thoughts and ideas for assessing their low and intermediate ESOL students, but there should be more documented, researched, and published on this very real issue.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

Adventures in Assessment certainly has a commitment to exploring all forms of alternative/authentic assessment. What other resources do we have available and what is being done to research this topic? As you can see from the teacher's work, a lot of thought and hours have gone into assessing ESOL learners. Unfortunately, there aren't many vehicles for teachers to share what they've done with each other.

Or worse yet, teachers don't feel as if they are doing anything special. Almost all the teachers I spoke with said something like "well, I'm sure everyone is doing this..." Sometimes what may seem obvious or simple to one may spark a whole new approach to assessment in someone else.

For example, this experience has helped me with my learner. For one, I decided to have my learner guide me. If he found something too easy, I pushed him to somehow communicate to me why he felt that way and what I could do to make my instruction more satisfying to his needs. It turns out that he was an advanced writer and reader of English, but never really had the opportunity to *speak* English in his native country. Once this was established, I was able to work on his oral abilities. I also realized that the interpreter was my friend, so to speak. I learned many valuable insights from the interpreter although he was not at every session. He came every now and again at the beginning of our sessions. We need to share more of what we do with each other.

Adventures in Assessment is a good place for that, as is the Massachusetts newsletter *Bright Ideas* or other state newsletters, but we should definitely have other outlets. Lenore Balliro of the Adult Literacy Resource Institute in Boston is starting an ESOL listserv on e-mail for Massachusetts ESOL teachers. That should be a great forum for expressing ideas about assessment. *Adventures in Assessment* will be printing another journal midsummer of next year; maybe there could be more articles published on ESOL assessment in the upcoming issue.

There also needs to be more research what learners need to be taught and what are the most effective ways to do that. Along with that, we need more documentation on how variables like shock, trauma, and native language literacy (among others) influence assessment practices. A Center for Applied Linguistics study found that children who had literacy in any language fared better in acquiring another language than those who have no literacy *(Meeting Summary on Current Research and Theory on Effective ESL Instruction,* issued by the U.S. Department of Education, page 8). Studies like this should be made available to ESOL classrooms. On a national level, the TESOL conference is a good place to share ideas and find workshops on ESOL assessment as well as individual state adult education conferences. In Massachusetts, conferences like MATSOL and Network '97 may have ESOL assessment components embedded.

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LOOKING AT MANDATES

Funders I talked with do not mandate a particular assessment test. Some teachers have the perception, however, that funders are mandating the BEST or TABE for example.

Why? I discovered that the wording of documentation requirements can sometimes make the intent confusing. A funder, for example, may require a student SPL level when they enter a program and when they exit or move up, but not specify a test. One of the most reliable and popular ways to arrive at SPL levels is the BEST. Therefore, a teacher may translate a requirement of an SPL level as being a mandate for using the BEST.

Sometimes, too, programs write proposals including an assessment tool and as part of the program design. What is often related to the teachers administering the tests is not the funder's requirement, but what the program said it would do.

There *are* funders who require specific tests. "The Massachusetts Department of Education requires that every program funded to provide ABE services (including basic literacy through adult secondary education and English for speakers of other languages) incorporate an initial an ongoing assessment of each student's skills, capabilities, and goals. The Department expects such assessments to be appropriate, reliable, and valid measures. The Department does not, however, require programs to use any particular assessment instruments. Programs may choose from a wide variety of standardized, norm or criterion-referenced[1] commercial tests and/or use center-developed assessments, including those referred to as "alternative assessments", structures, portfolios, etc. Our goal is to ensure that students are appropriately placed and that their progress is appropriately documented. Assessments that enable our students to become partners in managing their own learning are particularly encouraged." (Robert Bickerton, ABE State Director, MA)

The Industrial Service Program in Massachusetts requires Worker Assistance Centers to administer the TABE survey or the Job Corps Reading Screen with the WRAT 3. The Department of Labor (original source of funding) requires that there be a reading level score and a math score, not an equivalent, for each of the people enrolled in their programs. They offer a list of options to arrive at these scores. In Massachusetts the ISP program narrowed down the list to conduct adequate training on these tools. Some programs may use other tests like the ABLE. ORI (Office for Refugees and immigrants) requires SPL levels for entry and exit but does not require its programs to use the BEST. If a specific test is not required, and it is an SPL level or a grade level equivalent, then we need to explore other valid and reliable ways to achieve the same outcome.

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[1] Norm-referenced tests measure how well learners perform in relation to a norming group. Learners are tested to determine how their skills/scores compare with those of others who have taken the test, not how well they have mastered certain knowledge or skills. Criterion-referenced tests measure how well learners perform in relation to some absolute standard. Learners are tested to determine how well they mastered certain knowledge or skills, not how they performed in relation to a norming group or to others in the class. (Testing and Assessment in Adult Basic Education and English as a Second Language Programs)

Volunteer Tutors and Learner Assessment: What Counts Here?

by
Janet Isserlis

Vancouver, BC
Canada

What are adult education programs hoping to assess when they ask their volunteer tutors to assess learner progress? This old, old question has been kicked around in the area of alternative assessment for a very long time. Salaried practitioners have been pondering the value of assessment instruments for years. Volunteer tutors, however, may or may not have been included in the staff development loop when questions about 'what counts' are being asked. This essay attempts to address the fact that volunteers and volunteer programs can benefit as greatly as any others from a processive approach to ongoing assessment, and suggests some steps that may already be in place within many ABE/ESL programs utilizing volunteers.

I've worked in ESL/literacy for the past 16 years, and since 1989 have been one of many people 'seriously' considering assessment. Nonetheless, for the past two and a half years, when asked to fill in learner progress sheets at the learning center where I've volunteered in Vancouver's downtown east side, I've simply filled in the forms I was given, usually writing something general (and occasionally vague) about each learner's overall abilities. It's meaningless, I figured; some papers for the auditor to count. So what? I was just the volunteer in that picture.

This past spring when I was again given learner assessment sheets and told that the process this time would be slightly different, I decided that a shrug and a sigh weren't helpful responses; volunteers and learners can and should have access to information about and input into learner assessment documents. I'd been given a reading from *True Stories in the News* (and something else I can no longer recall) to give to my students. Essentially I was being asked to administer a reading comprehension test to my conversation group. The information gleaned from this test would then be transferred to a progress report *(see tool on page 19)*.

This time I reconsidered. Where I had previously written out something very general about my learners' progress, it now occurred to me that a casually-written, hollow assessment statement seemed pointless. If I thought that the exercise had little intrinsic value, (i.e. I was not convinced that the people for whom the reports were being written would really read them closely), I did, however, see the possibility of using the form as a vehicle through which my learners could reflect upon their own progress in a somewhat more meaningful manner. As well, my colleagues at the center later pointed out to me that these forms may in fact be used by center staff as a form of in-house monitoring; that is, the forms might assist staff in shifting learners from level to level as their abilities increase.

Why discuss this? It's too easy to fill in some form with little effort or substance in order to appease a funder. Approximately the same amount of time and energy could be dedicated to a meaningful session, at the very least, wherein learners are asked to consider their progress over a given period of time, and tutors can share in the process of reflection around learning gains and progress.

LEARNERS AT THE CENTER

I've worked with two core groups since I've been a volunteer at this center. Over the course of two and a half years, other learners have joined and left, but this last group has been together consistently for more than a year.

In addition to the English as an Additional Language students with whom I work as a volunteer tutor, the Learning Centre is also open to adult basic education (ABE) students. They are registered through the Vancouver School Board and their attendance hours are carefully documented and counted in reports which, in turn (along with assessment protocols), are translated into continued funding dollars (or so it seems — remember I'm a volunteer and only part-time/occasionally salaried worker at this center).

The learners who attend the center are those who live and/or work in the downtown east side core (the poorest postal code in Canada), as well as others who attend from around the city. The issue of who attends — who should or shouldn't be allowed access to services — is a hotly-contested issue, beyond the scope of this essay. This information is presented in order to give the reader a sense of the context in which the volunteer program has existed.

Throughout the course of the year, I would periodically ask learners to discuss their feelings about the group — what was working, what wasn't, what needed to be changed. Keep in mind that this has been a conversation group meeting once a week for two hours. Our work together has consisted of reading and discussing newspaper articles and other information that learners and/or I bring in. Occasionally we'd just chat. The point has been to build oral/aural ability. Over time we've come to know one another, at least a little. Some of the learners phone me at home to ask questions, others have written to me when I've been away for the summer. We've had the odd meal or two together. We've spoken periodically about the group itself, what learners like to do, what they want to learn. Asking them to consider their own progress seemed a legitimate request. The actual document used by the Centre is described below.

THE PROGRESS REPORT

The Progress Report form utilized at the Centre asks for the learner's name, date of birth, initial intake date, report date, instructor's name and level at intake. It is worth noting that the instructor is not the same person as the tutor (a volunteer) who is working with the learner in the tutoring group. As well, assessment of level at intake can be arbitrary, not standardized in any way; therefore 'progress' is slippery to describe, at best. Work has been ongoing to try to standardize intake assessment. As far as I can tell, this does not necessarily mean using standardized instruments so much as agreeing upon levels and criteria among those staff who do intake work.

The reporting form given us for our ESL tutor groups appears to be the same form used to document progress for ABE students. It seeks generalized information which may account for ABE learners' movement within levels, but gives little room for real reflection about ESL learners' less 'visible' progress, such as the gradual shifts in abilities, usage and confidence with English. Further, it is difficult to expect a form to facilitate reflection upon factors contributing to or inhibiting language development — learning about one's new environment/culture or the ups and downs which impact on all learning processes. I am critical of the exercise, not necessarily of the learning center. Funders want numbers, reports, some sort of accountability. But the one (accountability) does not necessarily need to preclude the other (meaningful information).

After reading an earlier draft of this paper, two colleagues at the Centre told me that Learning Centre staff have, in fact, spoken at great length about the issue of assessment. It was suggested that the auditors who monitor the center are more interested in finding completed intake information than in gauging actual progress. An ongoing communication log, and student folders — available to learners — serve as means of documenting ongoing work. Staff at the Centre, like those in many others, simply lack the time or institutional support to refine their assessment work. Instructors are mindful of the importance of meaningful assessment, but have had no real means of communicating this to tutors and/or among one another in consistent ways.

Instructors are mindful of the importance of meaningful assessment, but have had no real means of communicating this to tutors and/or among one another in consistent ways.

The progress update information sought is presented in the tool at the bottom of this page. It represents the actual amount of information that's implicitly expected to be given. I have no interest in attacking the Centre for using this form, but do want to consider ways in which to engage in purposeful assessment activity when a funder asks for 'hard data' and intake information and staff is pressed for time in a busy

Written Language Skills

Oral Language Skills

Math

Social Studies

Other Activities

Recommended Level/Course Next Term ______________________ center. Funders want complete student files in order to determine numbers of FTE (full-time equivalents) and non-FTE students. My colleagues at the center tell me that meaningful assessment is important to many of the workers at the Centre. Time is in extremely short supply. Working day in and day out in a drop-in center with a shifting learner population demands consistent documentation and processes which need time to develop into useful assessment protocols. It is easier, in this context, as a volunteer with a very limited commitment to an agency, and with a very small group of learners, for me to suggest alternatives.

ONE ALTERNATIVE

I asked the people in the conversation group to think about what they believed they'd accomplished during the past year. I wrote a short piece to accompany their writing, and included it with their reports:

Progress Report, 15 May, 1996

I've asked [the learners in the group] to think and write about their own progress over the past year. We have had discussions about police, food, restaurants, the Internet, newspaper articles and book excerpts that we've read. We've also done some creative writing and work on computers.

I think that the core group has made slow and steady progress and participants appear to be more confident and comfortable users of English. My learners, who have given permission for their writing to be reproduced here wrote the following (with only very minor editing for clarity).

Sam's report

Since I started to learn English one and half year ago I feel my English had make a kind of progress. I can communicate with a lot people. and talking freely with people on English. I am being happy on it. I felt that. if you want to get a express way on learning English, the first important thing is you should get more practice in daily life. For example .. I watch the English TV often, keep talk with the people on English often. And now I am looking some people and make friends with them. Lastly I have a lot interest on talking learning English.

Report (this learner gave permission to use his writing, but not his name)

For the past year, I have made a lot of progress in English in our class which Janet taught hard. At first I have improved my hearing and speaking skill through our teacher explained the difficult questions one after another time. Now. I can call a phone to a company to look for a job or ask some questions. But the year before last year I could not do so. Furthermore, I have also improved my writing and reading skills. I can write a simple business for something.

Emily's report

In last year, I have learned more English from the class. I feel more comfortable than before when use English. I want to learn more. [After Emily had written the piece above, I wrote: Emily, can you think of times/places that are easy or more difficult to speak English, to which she responded: 'depend who you are talk to.'

Hay's Report

Last year, I joined a discussion group in [this] Centre. I wanted to improve my speaking English. Through the programs of the group, I learned some new words and idioms. I have more opportunity to talk in English too. I feel less uneasy to talk with others in English now.

These reports enable us to reflect on what we had done and what we wanted to do. I imagine that the learners' notes were attached to the progress report form and filed. Additional information may have been added to the actual progress report form, and/or translated to fit that form in some way. Who will read the reports? What will they make of the information? Can or should the learners' comments somehow be translated into something more 'standard'? Many learners, particularly those whose first cultures value respect for teachers, may well write what they think the instructor/tutor wants to hear; candor is difficult at best across cultures and within the uneven power balance between teachers and learners. Nonetheless, a self-reporting process such as this, repeated over time, may assist some learners in gaining greater insights into their own progress. As trust is built between learners and tutors, more frank discussions of what works and doesn't work in the classroom may ensue as well.

POSSIBILITIES/SUGGESTIONS

As a volunteer tutor at the Centre in Vancouver, I was happy spending time with learners, sometimes coming in early and/or spending time at home in order to prepare materials. I didn't have a lot of extra time, however, nor do many volunteers (and paid workers). It seems important to build this assessment work — especially in the case of volunteer workers — into 'regular' hours.

As part of their training, volunteers/new workers may be asked to observe intake processes (if confidentiality is not at issue) and to discuss with more experienced practitioners the learners' abilities and weaknesses at the time of entry. Assessment processes could be discussed within tutor training sessions as part of the ongoing work of language/literacy development. Tutors' notes and logs, along with learners' writing samples, should be utilized in ways that help tutors more clearly understand learners' progress without adding significant blocks of time to their work.

Many programs have already devised their own forms of assessment/progress reporting. Learners and practitioners together could devise appropriate headings/ particular questions for their sites/ classes and jointly complete the reports, and/or reflect upon the questions at regular intervals. It is possible, for instance, that my learners' comments could be translated into a grid (see, for example, the grid detailed in *Bringing Literacy to Life*, page 145). Such a grid could be revisited regularly by learners and their volunteer tutors; regular staff could participate in this process periodically, too, in order to assist volunteers as needed. Learners could be invited at regular intervals (monthly or quarterly, for example) to sit with staff and/or volunteers to review the items on the grid and to reflect upon where progress has been made, where work is still needed. These conferences could be built into regular class time, where everyone is asked to write a paragraph reflecting their feelings about their own learning for the particular time period. As learners work on their writing, the facilitator(s) can move about the room to confer with learners individually.

As trust is built between learners and tutors, more frank discussions of what works and doesn't work in the classroom may ensue as well.

While serious questions have been raised about the use of volunteers within literacy work *(see Kazemek, 1988)*, many programs can and do utilize volunteers very effectively, and volunteers make important contributions to the programs they assist. Why not enable them to learn more about an ongoing part of learning and teaching so they can become yet more effective?

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Developing a Native Language Literacy Program

by
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Tool co-developed with Seidy Rodriguez-Ham

For five years, Centro Hispano de Chelsea needed a Native Language Literacy class in Spanish to meet the needs of our population. When I started at Centro Hispano, one program taught ESL with a medical emphasis for students who tested at an SPL level of 5-6. This program is designed for 1) foreign licensed medical professionals , 2) individuals currently working in acute care hospitals, and 3) individuals pursuing a career in the health care industry. Needless to say, the students in this program have a much more established and formal educational background and were an excellent match for this program.

Initial elation over the success of this program didn't last long however. Teachers began getting feedback and suggestions from students on how the program could better meet their needs. When these suggestions were not implemented, attrition began to rise. It became apparent that our education department was severely lacking.

While we were meeting the needs of our target population, these same students were asking about the needs of their families. Their parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles and children were all in need of English and other referral services. The requests for other ESL classes were overwhelming. We went after funding to expand our ESL offerings.

We started to build our ESL base with informal classes where we assessed students via the BEST (Basic English Skills Test). Our funding agency mandated this tool in our first program, so we considered it as good as any other tool for our new program. It also seemed that when writing proposals or communicating with funders, they understood the language of the BEST SPL, MELT etc.

Yet, the BEST was often off the mark. The placement test never seemed to coincide with what the teachers thought about the levels of students. It gave us some information for placement but not the information we needed to do it accurately.

Specifically, it did not account for all the variables in our ESL population. Students were ending up in classes and had to be moved after the beginning of a cycle. Still we were able to work things out. Our ESL classes were meeting the needs of many more people. We had a long waiting list, but we had a program we felt was meeting a large community need.

It wasn't long however, before we noticed a rather peculiar thing. The teachers had brought to my attention their frustration with not being able to move the classes along because of a few students. While most of our students were making excellent progress and were moving up to higher levels of ESL or out of the program altogether, some were making little or no progress at all. These students were staying in the same class and ESL level for upwards of a year and even two in some instances. As a result, some beginning ESL classes were full and accepted very few new students from the waiting list.

We decided it was time to look closely at the classes we were offering. Was something missing in our program that could account for this? We started by spending a whole in-service day evaluating different components of our program as a whole group.

We began by looking at the numbers. How many students had come in? What were their BEST scores when entering? What were their scores from class work, quizzes, etc.? and what were their BEST scores when ending each cycle? We discovered that most of the students who repeated two or more cycles were in the lower level classes, while the higher level classes saw little to no repetition. So we narrowed our inquiry to lower level classes and moved our focus from student to instruction: Was the teacher appropriate for the class? Was the material appropriate for the class? Was the method of teaching appropriate for the class? The majority of the class was doing well and showed mobility into the higher level classes. All teacher evaluations written by students had come out very positive, the class curriculum was suitable, and the course work all seemed to be in order.

We expected some issues with their native language but we wanted to see what those issues were.

One of the teachers suggested we ask all the students in the lower level classes to write a short paragraph in Spanish (their native language), perhaps about their early educational experiences. We expected some issues with their native language but we wanted to see what those issues were. Was it a literacy problem? Was it an issue of a bad educational experience? Was it a result of a learning style difference? After the students provided us with a writing sample, the results were so clear and relevant that they gave us two major pieces to the puzzle.

The first was that the lesser-developed paragraphs with the most mistakes all belonged to those students who had remained in the lower level class for more than two cycles. These mistakes ranged from spelling errors, grammatical mistakes, poor sentence structure, to malformed letters, such as backwards p's etc....also the actual writing on the page was not smooth flowing but looked as if a lot of effort was put into writing each word.

The second was that all the students were over 55 years of age. None of these students had education in their own country beyond the third grade (even that was considered advanced); some had absolutely no formal education in either reading or writing. All considered themselves "campesinos," persons who grew up on a farm. Their family priorities were to work on their farms starting at a very young age so they had few opportunities to further their education in their native language.

We needed a class to fit these specific Native Language Literacy (NLL) needs. We believe that people have better success at learning literacy of a second language if they have literacy skills in their native language. This belief led us to pursue funding for a Native Language Literacy Class. Centro Hispano de Chelsea then joined forces with Bunker Hill Community College and other agencies in Chelsea: Chelsea City Hall, Chelsea Community Volunteer Center, Cambodian Community of Massachusetts, Refugee Services, Consilio Hispano de Cambridge, and the Chelsea Community to respond to a request for proposals through the Massachusetts Department of Education. Through this consortium we are able to provide ESOL, GED and pre-GED in Spanish and English and two NLL programs in Spanish and Khmer.

We could now finally start our program, but the next stumbling block was finding or developing the proper assessment tool. As previously stated, we had used the BEST for our other programs as well as supplemental materials. This test could not address our need to measure Native Language Literacy. We had to look elsewhere for a tool.

We looked at various alternatives, including resource people like Yvonne Lalyre at the Mass. Department of Education and Seidy Rodriguez-Ham, our literacy teacher. Seidy drafted our own in-house Native Language Literacy Assessment Tool *(see Tool, next page)*. This tool began to assess students' knowledge of the alphabet, sentence structure, and basic math applications. With invaluable assistance from Diane Paxton, the Elderly Program Life Skills instructor at Centro Hispano, we were able to get an even more advanced assessment and form a more comprehensive curriculum for the NLL program. Seemingly all segments were in place, but there was one last – and probably the largest problem left.

We had identified the students who needed the classes and had found an instructor. We had then developed the necessary assessment tools as well as the curriculum. Yet the students were extremely dissatisfied , and many of them refused to come to the class. Many of them denied their need for classes in native language literacy. Others admitted they needed to learn to read and write in their own language, but wanted and needed to learn English. There was also the issue of being viewed as an "alphabeta(o)" and the stigma attached to not being able to read and write. This was hard for some students to overcome. It was also hard for us to convince students that this was the best path to learning English. Some students resisted and wanted to just learn English. After listening to their concerns, we then developed what we hoped would be our last solution to the issues surrounding our Native Language Literacy Program.

We offered the students a supplementary class which taught ESL life skills (shopping, emergency procedures, going to the doctor…). They could take the literacy class Monday through Wednesday and take the Life Skills class Thursday and Friday. This would assist them with their literacy skills, while at the same time teach them survival English. This option was extremely popular and even helped us solve other problems we were having in our ESL classes mainly dealing with issues of stereotypes and prejudices from students coming from different parts of Latin America.

Students coming from some Latin American countries are very strong in their English reading and writing skills, seemingly due to learning English in school, some as early as first grade. This English instruction was generally taught in Spanish and emphasized reading and writing, yet did little to develop their oral/aural skills.

Individuals from other Latin American countries, however, have been in this country for a long time and have relied much more on the oral/aural skills to survive and work and have had few or no opportunities to develop their reading and writing skills.

Our Multi Level ESL Life Skills class served a dual purpose in the education , employment and training department. Not only did it see success with our diverse students from Latin America, but also helped up to implement and see success in our Native Language Literacy Program. Our two classes brought together students from different countries in Latin America for a common purpose. Through these classes we were able to facilitate conversations and learnings that helped people see the similarities and differences in their languages, phrases and terminology and as a result gave students a more accurate picture of the different cultures.

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TOOL: CONTESTE LO SIGUIENTE

Nombre ______________________ Fecha_______________

1. Escriba las Vocales.

2. Escriba las letras del abcedario.

3. Forme palabras con las siguientes letras.

M

S

P

L

N

4. Forme oraciones con las siguientes palabras

mama

luna

nene

casa

papa

Complete el siguiente parrafo

5. Escriba en la raya la letre que falta

Tengo ami___os son Luis y Mario ___aseamos juntos

po___ el campo jugamos ____uando salimos de la

escuela es muy ___onito.

6. Escriba en cada raya los numeros que estan antes y despues de:

___ ___ ___ 4 ___ ___ ___

___ ___ ___ 10 ___ ___ ___

___ ___ ___ 20 ___ ___ ___

___ ___ ___ 37 ___ ___ ___

___ ___ ___ 49 ___ ___ ___

7. Escriba los numeros de 5 en 5.

8. Escriba 5 numeros pares.

9. Escriba el numero que falta en la raya y que al sumarlo de a 10.

7 + __ = 10

___ + 8 = 10

___ + ___ = 10

4 + 6 = ___

____ + 1 = 10

10. Reste

8 -	9 -	10 -	6 -	7 -
3	2	5	1	2
___	___	____	___	___

Planning and Evaluation Teams: A Model for Workplace Education

Evaluating the quality and effectiveness of workplace education programs creates both opportunities and challenges. To meet the challenges, the Massachusetts Workplace Education Initiative promotes a team-based approach to program planning, implementation, evaluation, and institutionalization. The approach uses a "Planning and Evaluation Team" model. Since its inception in 1991, the model has been implemented in over 50 workplace education programs. This article describes the issues that have surfaced and includes a response to them from four practitioners.

by
Olivia Steele,
Deborah Tuler,
Jane Shea,
John Antonellis,
Kathe Kirkman

Massachusetts Workplace
Literacy Program

Evaluating the effectiveness of workplace education programs creates exciting opportunities. If done well, evaluation results can demonstrate concrete and tangible benefits of the program to the students, the employer, the union, and in some cases the community. Evaluation results — including, but not limited to, assessment results — can show what was learned, how that learning transferred to, and got used at, the workplace and in the community, and to what extent participation in the program impacts on the performance of the business. Evaluation results can also show to what extent the improvement of basic or language skills contributes to increasing the quality of goods and services and improving production or service delivery processes. It can inform program improvement, can promote institutionalization of the program, and can help determine whether to continue funding.

Evaluating the effectiveness of workplace education programs also creates challenges. Identifying gains in student learning, describing the transfer of that learning, documenting the impact of the program on the workplace, and demonstrating the program's overall quality and effectiveness have been daunting tasks for many practitioners. Several factors make evaluation challenging. One important factor is that workplace education programs are not yet part of the workplace's infrastructure and culture when they are initiated. Establishing this infrastructure and culture, as well as building systems to take care of planning, implementation, and evaluation functions need to take place simultaneously and require a considerable amount of resources and energy.

Another factor is the involvement of many different players, including students, teachers, administrators, employers, and union representatives, all of whom bring their own ideas and expectations regarding what constitutes success. Striking an appropriate balance between these different expectations is not an easy task.

The varying degree of involvement in the program by those who have a vested interest in it or have decisionmaking authority over it, is yet another important challenge to evaluating a program. When key decision makers such as Chief Executive Officers are involved directly, planning, implementation, evaluation, and institutionalization decisions appear to be facilitated more easily. High levels of managerial involvement, however, have in some cases created an imbalance of power. When key decisionmakers are not involved directly in the planning and evaluation of a program, those who are need to invest considerable time in keeping decisionmakers fully apprised. If not, the program may end up being decided upon from a distance by someone based only on his/her expectations and perceptions as to how responsive the program is. This perception may not be an accurate reflection of the program's performance.

Evaluating workplace education programs is most definitely challenging because of the expertise required to develop and implement an evaluation system. Ensuring the confidentiality of records, avoiding legal issues related to testing, and developing instruments that are reliable and valid are not easy tasks.

The most important challenge, however, is one of facilitation and is faced by the provider who in many instances has the primary responsibility for overseeing the evaluation. Often the teacher or the coordinator of the program become responsible for managing the whole planning, implementation, evaluation, and institutionalization of the program. These are not small tasks and require a substantial amount of skill and experience in programming and working with different constituent groups. Even when teachers and coordinators have the know how and resources to do this work well, they still encounter numerous obstacles on the road to demonstrating program effectiveness. Limited access to information and key individuals at the company or union have made the management of the planning and evaluation process a tough hurdle to jump.

When key decisionmakers are not involved directly in the planning and evaluation of a program, those who are need to invest considerable time in keeping decisionmakers fully apprised.

FROM PRACTICE TO THEORY AND POLICY: THE PLANNING AND EVALUATION TEAM MODEL

For a decade, a variety of federal and state funding sources have supported workplace education programs in Massachusetts. Under the umbrella of the Massachusetts Workplace Education Initiative — a statewide partnership among business, labor, education, and government (represented by agencies that fund workplace education programs) — extensive evaluations are conducted annually to identify best practices. A 1991 evaluation summarized the challenges practitioners faced in implementing workplace education programs and articulated policy recommendations to address them.

One of the main recommendations was to put in place a governance structure, rather than an advisory structure, for local business, labor and education collaborations. The recommendation acknowledged the need to systemically address the significance of performing, planning, implementation, evaluation, and institutionalization functions through a team-based approach. This approach would ensure that clear and realistic goals for the program were set, agreed upon by all partners, and eventually met by enabling all those who could benefit from the program to participate in shaping it. The proposed model was the "Planning and Evaluation Team." The MA Department of Education has since required all recipients of its workplace education awards to implement this team-based approach.

The initial results of piloting the Planning and Evaluation Team (PET) model were favorable and currently variations of the model are being used by all workplace education programs funded by the Massachusetts Department of Education with National Workplace Literacy Program and 8% Job Training Partnership Act funds. Today there are 27 PETs at sites funded through the National Workplace Literacy Program and an additional five at sites funded through the 8% Job Training Partnership Act. PETs consist of representatives from upper management, supervisors, employees (who are enrolled in the program, have an interest in enrolling, or have graduated from the program), teachers and administrators representing the education provider, and labor representatives. Teams meet regularly throughout the life of the program. Initially, teams may meet very frequently. As the program solidifies, teams meet less often.

> *When debating goals, it often becomes clear that team members may hold different views. To strike a balance, realism and solid data help the team get clearer on realistic goals and how to prioritize them.*

FUNCTIONS AND TASKS PERFORMED BY PLANNING AND EVALUATION TEAMS

The purposes of the PET are multi-fold: to plan the program, to oversee implementation, to design and implement evaluation, to promote improvement, and to institutionalize and integrate the program in the long-term strategy of the business and/or union. The Massachusetts Department of Education views its funding as seed funds or an investment in building the capacity of the businesses or unions so they are equipped to continue the program without public funding. The return on this investment has been promising. Almost 65% of all partnerships that received funding under the National Workplace Literacy Program through four funding cycles, continued when public funding ended.

PETs handle specific tasks and go through several stages. First, the commitment from labor and management to a team-based approach is sought. Subsequently, a team is established by identifying key players in the company, labor and the learning provider. In this discussion, the role of the team, the time and energy required, and ways to orient team members are usually clarified. The first tasks are usually accomplished in pre-program discussions between the education provider, management, and the union.

Once the team is established, a start-up meeting is set. The team begins identifying goals for the workplace education program by answering questions such as "What is our ultimate reason for having the program ? What is the purpose of this program? What goals do we hope to accomplish by the end of this program? When debating goals, it often becomes clear that team members may hold different views. To strike a balance, realism and solid data help the team get clearer on realistic goals and how to prioritize them. At this point, it is critical to spell out how program goals relate to business and labor goals and not to view them as fully equal. Workplace education programs can help address business needs and goals but in few instances are the sole incentive needed.

The next task involves identifying appropriate indicators that show the program is making progress towards its goals. Following this step, the PET identifies which components of the program (e.g. three ESOL classes) and what kind and level of business and labor support (e.g., release time) is needed. This is also the time when resources are allocated.

Deciding what to evaluate, how, when, and why is next. The PET selects or develops ways to gather the data the program needs; collects and analyzes the data; and utilizes the information to improve the program. In considering data-gathering instruments, the PET considers resources (e.g., time and dollars required); levels of participation required; staff expertise in evaluating; and other factors.

Improving the program based on evaluation results may lead to modifying goals. This is the last task the PET undertakes after going through the planning and evaluation cycle once. PETs, however, do not necessarily wait until this stage to make revisions to their goals. Changes in the industry (e.g., the recent restructuring and refinancing of health care) may cause the team to modify the course of the program prior to completing its planning and evaluation cycle. Another instance may be that the team discovers that they are collecting important data that are not captured by its current goal statements. These instances demonstrate the need to implement stages and tasks for PETs on an ongoing basis that allows for flexibility and ensures that the process is non-linear.

FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE: IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

PETs have been successful to varying degrees. More than five years of working with the PET model has taught practitioners that a number of issues surface year after year and in both state-funded programs and other publicly- and privately-funded programs that have attempted to replicate the PET model. The issues are:

- How do we start up a PET in a program that is **not** funded by a public funding source that requires team-based approaches to programming?
- How do we get supervisors and other company representatives involved in looking at program impact on the workplace?
- How does the PET as a group develop and use a set of tools to gather data?
- What do PET members need to be aware of when developing tools? What happens when we get data we cannot use?
- How do teachers and coordinators on PETs facilitate identifying goals that do not hold the program accountable for the broader company goals, which may require more initiatives or interventions than the program?

Program coordinators from workplace education programs at business sites across the Commonwealth responded to these issues and identified lessons learned.

1. How do we convince an employer of the importance of a governing body responsible for developing and implementing a workplace education program when it is not required by a grant? How do we pull all the necessary players together? Debbie Tuler talks about her experience in a Hospital Workplace Education program:

I was raised on Massachusetts' team-based approach to planning and evaluating workplace education programs. The data collected over the years in the Massachusetts Department of Education Programs demonstrated the value of this team-based approach. So, when I took over a private contract with a hospital (which had offered ESOL/ABE classes for five years without a team or advisory board), I expected that I would institute the PET model in order to bring the program in line with what I believe are indicators for effective programs. I also believe that a collaborative model like the PET approach is important because it keeps players connected, committed, and informed about what is involved in a long-term educational process, the workplace education program. I did realize, however, that I could not force it.

By asking questions and engaging supervisors and managers in conversations we encourage them to recognize the benefits.

First, I had to convince managers/ supervisors that it was worth their time and effort to be involved in the program at some level. Managers and supervisors were unfamiliar with the whole idea of having a coordinator/instructor speak with them about areas of concern and evidence of progress and to request documents and information from their departments. They viewed the program as a benefit that the hospital offered to workers and in some abstract way was a benefit to them too, but they had never clearly understood this benefit.

I pursued conversation with managers and supervisors. There were a lot of changes taking place in the hospital. This meant that employees would have an opportunity to upgrade their position if their language skills improved and if supervisors and managers noticed that their language skills had improved. It was important to get supervisors and managers to see the benefits of the program to them and to the workplace in general. By asking questions and engaging supervisors and managers in conversations we encourage them to recognize the benefits.

By encouraging managers and supervisors from Environmental Services, Transportation and Nutritional Services at the hospital to offer input into the program, I did in fact open the door for expressing concerns. Until now, they had mainly voiced frustrations that more workers from the day shift do not take advantage of the benefit of classes (classes met from 3-5 pm and their shifts end at 3:30). At the same time, supervisors can only let so many people attend class at the same time during work hours because of staffing constraints. Students pointed out to me that other day shift workers cannot attend class because they had other jobs or child care concerns. Issues of concern then related to scheduling, recruitment and policies. I pointed out to each party, supervisors and students, that it would be easier to resolve these issue if everyone sat at the table together and discussed these issues rather than having me be an intermediary.

Last spring (1996), after six months of working at the hospital and getting to know the various players, I was able to get commitments on the part of managers from Environmental Services, Nutritional Services, and Transportation to participate in an "Education Committee" (a PET by another name) which would include workers in the program. Their task would be to address some of the issues mentioned above. We would start there and move to other areas of the program where this collective input is needed, including curriculum design and goal setting.

We had our first meeting in October to air and clarify concerns and to identify next steps. After discussing the reasons people cannot come to class and the issues surrounding releasing workers to attend class, we came to some decisions. These changes amounted to: change the time of day of classes in order to encourage more participation from day shift workers, have the instructor attend departmental staff meetings to promote the program with assistance from current and past students, and set up a buddy system where workers who attend the program could bring another worker/friend to class to try it out.

What impressed me about the meeting was that people were talking to each other, not just me. I also got a commitment from the committee to meet monthly to resolve issues that arise. I felt that communication was opening . With this, though, came the realization that the managers believed that the programs solely benefited the workers who participated in it and not themselves. The meeting did little to change this attitude "They should take advantage of this…they should make time to improve their language skills". For the program to continue and develop, this perception needs to change. This can be done in the committee or with individual managers. It is important to keep asking questions and engaging in dialogue. They need to buy into the program so that they argue for its continuation amidst budget cuts and layoffs.

My experience at the hospital during the past nine months has made it clear to me that PETs (or their equivalents) in different workplaces may play different roles and define their purposes in different ways. Defining these roles and purposes is a real challenge.

2. How do we get supervisors and other company representatives involved in looking at program impact in the workplace? And why is this important? Jane Shea from Quinsigamond Community College's workplace education programs talks about taking involvement of supervisors and other company personnel to another level:

It really all starts with the initial goal setting process that we do with our planning and evaluation teams. This is our springboard. We ask the PET to help identify people within their workplace to solicit feedback about the progress of the program. We have them identify people who they think are not that knowledgeable about the program and its benefits, as well as those who are directly involved through the PET, supervisors of workers etc.

Most people tend to respond to questions about program impact and progress by talking about individual students. We make it clear that we design our questions to help people look more broadly at the program's impact and less on individual students. This process takes time; it also involves asking the questions over and over and engaging in dialogue. For example, we ask, 'Have you seen any changes in the workplace/workers? What do you hope to see in this workplace after the program has ended?

Of course, getting people to answer questions can be a difficult task. People are generally very busy and hard to track down so we need to be flexible in soliciting this information. As the coordinator, I will go to staff meetings and use the questions to gather information collectively. I will ask people when I happen to see them in the hall. I will send questions out to individuals in a survey form and then arrange an appointment to meet them and discuss the questions. I have also made appointments without giving out the questions in advance.

It is worth finding a variety of methods to gather this information in order to note the many different perspectives within the company. The ideas and comments we get from supervisors and workers who have direct or indirect impact on the program is very valuable. They deepen our understanding of the workplace. These comments inform us about the employees' perception of the program.

Of course there is always the question of confidentiality for students as well as supervisors. We are very clear up front before we start working with programs, that we have a clear policy protecting the confidentiality of individual students in the program and those that have offered to answer the evaluation questions. We realize that it is very hard when you ask someone how they think the program is going for them not to think about an individual student in particular. The questions, as I mentioned before are designed to look at the general and not specific.

But here is the dilemma: we really like hearing and sharing about the successes of students or the positive feedback of supervisors and managers and really have to try to hold to the same principles and give that worker the opportunity to decide whether to disclose the success; such as getting a GED or not.

Although people within the program (learners, teachers, PET members) aid in the data collection process, PET has the responsibility to report that information to others in a way that recognizes and validates the supervisor's voice, maintains a level of confidentiality for the workers participating in the program, and gives enough information to help inform the planning process.

3. How does the PET as a group develop and use a set of tools to gather data? John Antonellis, coordinator of Workplace Education programs at Jewish Vocational Programs in Boston, talks about where tools may come from:

The starting point for developing evaluation tools is the program's goal statement. Usually, the PET will examine the goals for the program and discuss who is in the best position to evaluate each goal. At this point we'll have a brainstorm about the kinds of tools that could be used to gather the information we need. Next, I'll draft a set of tools and bring these back to the PET at the next meeting. Having something concrete to work with is important. I've found that this makes it very clear if we're all talking on the same wavelength. The education provider is the perceived expert regarding program evaluation and does in fact have access to a wealth of resources based on past experience which can be used to develop evaluation tools that are tailored to each program. Further, as most PET representatives are under pretty serious time constraints, coming to the PET with a draft in hand is a more efficient use of time. The PET then looks over the drafts and any needed changes are made.

Embedded in every evaluation tool are assumptions about your program's goals. Ideally, the process described above occurs early on in the establishment of a workplace program. While programs usually develop a goals statement early on in the process, they have not always linked their evaluation tools explicitly to these goals. In some cases, the program may be using tools developed for a previous program or may have been developed independently of the goals statement. In cases like this, what I do is examine both the goals statement and the existing evaluation tools. Together with the PET we attempt to make the connection between the goals statement and evaluation tools explicit.. In some instances we have found that the goals embedded in an evaluation tool more accurately reflect the true program goals, and the goal statement is adapted accordingly. In other instances new tools are developed to account for any gaps found between the desired program goals and existing evaluation tools. My experience has been that programs are generally very good at designing tools which measure the impact of the program on the participant, but measuring the impact on the workplace and on the educational partnership is a greater challenge.

We are really trying to develop tools which provide both qualitative and quantitative data that is used to improve existing programs and aid them in their efforts toward institutionalization. One of our most successful tools is the survey because it can be designed to provide both quantitative and qualitative information, it is relatively easy to administer, and requires only a minimum of time to complete. The surveys I've developed are explicitly tied to the goal statement, are short (one side of one page), and include a combination of open and closed ended questions. Open ended questions provide qualitative information while closed ended question provide quantitative results. Another advantage of using surveys as an evaluation tool is that the same survey can usually be adapted for use by both supervisors and program participants. So everyone is evaluating the program for the same goals.

4. What happens when we get data we cannot use?

I think I have heard this joke before, and the punch line is " manipulate the data" Wait! that was intended as humor and not a suggestion.

Most data can be used in " legitimate" descriptive ways even if that isn't really what had been planned. Any data collection plan should include a section on how you intend to use the data. Potential " use" problems often can be detected at the planning stage. However, if you forgot this step in the plan, relax and think creatively (and legitimately).

For instance, you may have hoped to discover how many students progressed during their time in your course, but you only have aggregate data indicating class pre-test scores of 10, 10, 20, 20, 30, and 30 and post-test scores of 10, 20, 20, 30, 30, and 30. In this example, one 10 could have moved to 30 (one person progressed); one 10 could have moved to 20 and one 20 moved to 30 (two people progressed); or two 10's could have moved to 20, one 20 moved to 30, and one 20 regressed to 10 (three people progressed); etc. You can't "use this data" to indicate how many students progressed, but you can use this data to state that the "class average post-test" (23.3) is 3.3 points (or 17%) higher than the " class average pre-test" (20). This is a classic "unit of analysis" problem: you wanted student (unit) information, but because you didn't track individual student progress, you got class (unit) information. Actually, I think a 17% overall increase sounds better than saying one or two students progressed.

Most data that is collected for loftier purposes (e.g. unearthing correlations) can be very useful as descriptive if your data really doesn't meet statistical assumptions. Most readers understand and enjoy pictures (descriptions) as much as statistics anyway.

A word of caution when thinking creatively about your data: in some cases your lemons cannot be turned into lemonade. If you really have garbage data (check list below for suggestions on getting garbage-proof data), don't try to recycle it....JUST TOSS IT OUT.

Hints for effective evaluations. These are suggestions that I find helpful in guiding my evaluation work.

1. **QUERY.** Start with a specific, simply-phrased research question, such as: Do students in the Math classes make fewer computational errors on sample work orders after the course than before? The question identifies WHO (students in the Math Class), WHAT (computation), HOW (sample work orders), and WHEN (before-and-after-course participation) measurement will occur.

2. **CLARIFY.** Try to identify factors that might impact the answer to your question, other than the factor you would expect. For the question above, the style of instruction may make a difference in outcomes if there are more than one class/instructor. The number of times (or time of day) students attend the class could impact outcomes. Each of these factors may require additional clarifications to your question, such as: 'Do students attend 90% of the math classes…' etc. These clarifications will guide your analysis and interpretation of the findings.

3. **SIMPLIFY.** Simple data collections, such as a test or survey, may not be as soul-satisfying as extensive interviews or simulations, but they are usually easier to do and yield easily-interpreted data. If you choose a more complex route to data collection, be sure you plan for the extra time that will probably be needed to analyze the results. For example, open-ended interviews often yield very rich information, but analyzing this data can require several readings, coding and reliability checks.

4. **QUANTIFY.** Anecdotal evidence enhances evaluations, but most businesses and funders need quantified results. Even data that is collected qualitatively, through interviews or open ended questions, should be coded into categories and quantified.

5. **UTILIZE.** Even if you are doing evaluation to satisfy a requirement of your employer or funder, make sure it is useful to your program and that you USE the information you get. Evaluation takes time and energy, and GOOD evaluation is an excellent tool for program improvement.

5. How do teachers and coordinators on a PET facilitate identifying goals that do not hold the program accountable for the broader company goals, which may require more initiatives or interventions than just the program?

It is crucial during the goal setting process to phrase questions in such a way as to help employers see the distinction between company goals and program goals. When an employer says that his goal is to improve productivity, ask how the program can help you achieve this goal. What is the link between the basic skills instruction which we offer and the company's broader goals of improving productivity? Are those who will participate in the program the ones who are responsible for this desired outcome? Who else is responsible but will not be participating in the program, and how will we get data from them?

Too often I have seen increased reading and writing skills as a desired outcome for participants when they are not in a position that requires any visible reading and writing or are often not offered opportunities to show gains in these areas. The result is that we as a team do not have the data needed to determine if the company goal is being reached. The answers to these questions above will force the team to define the connection between the program and the company, and articulate the parameters of the program. This questioning should be the starting point for setting goals and designing instruments.

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Learning from Experience: The Native Language Literacy Screening Device

by
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The Native Language Literacy Screening Device (NLLSD) is great. I first used it several months ago with students who were already enrolled in my Native Language Literacy class. At that time, the class worked on their reading and writing in Spanish, with math and science of course also being taught in Spanish. On the NLLSD form it asks students very broadly to write about their families, why they want to study English and something about their lives. This gives the students the opportunity to write about anything.

Most of the more advanced students expressed their desire and immediate need to learn English for a variety of reasons: employment so that they can better provide for their family; to help their children with their school work; and to be more independent in their daily tasks by relying less on translators.

The students were getting impatient with waiting to enter ESOL classes. They were tired and bored with reading and writing exclusively in Spanish. They wanted to learn, for example, practical phrases they could use on a daily basis. This made perfect sense to me but up until that point I felt pretty committed by our former program design to give instruction exclusively in Spanish. But after a good 90% of the students expressed such interest in wanting to learn English, via the Native Language Literacy Screening Device, I decided to ignore my fears and heed my students' wishes. Thus, to answer the question "How have I used the NLLSD?" I have used it to inform instruction and through this decision I have empowered my students.

I have used it for on-going assessment and just a week ago I used it again for on-going and initial assessment (the latter obviously for my newer students). I like the device because I can glean information about my students that I would not necessarily have had or learned otherwise. I would not necessarily have concentrated my focus on written questions about their families or why they wanted to learn English or what they liked to do in their spare time. The last essay they are asked to write has and will continue to inform instruction. It has helped me to better understand their specific family issues, and to be more sensitive to the students' desire to learn English.

One student who recently completed the NLLSD spoke only of her love for Bingo and the friends with whom she plays (she had an endless list of names). That was a real eye opener for me. She is always talking about how important it is to speak and understand English but since she cannot join the workforce, her needs are a bit different — perhaps. We will now start playing alphabet (and the traditional) Bingo again on a more frequent basis to meet her needs.

The students unanimously agree that this new idea of giving some instruction in English and some in Spanish is working. They are pleased that I was in a position to truly listen to them. Their attendance has improved since I started giving them instruction in English and they are becoming more responsible about calling and/or stopping by when they cannot make it to class.

The essay component of the device also helped me see their grammar deficiencies and strengths in their native Spanish. My being fluent in their language has and will continue to enable me to inform instruction. I also enjoyed reading the four pages that preceded the tool. The information was useful; it talks about how to use the instrument and what information you can conclude from the results of the NLLSD. .

The Native Language Literacy Screening Device is available in Arabic, Chinese, French, Haitian Creole, Italian, Polish, Russian, Spanish, Vietnamese, Portuguese and Tigrinya. It is available through the New York State Education Department. Attn: Dr. Patricia Mooney Gonzalez, Office of Workforce Preparation and Continuing Education, Room 307 EB, West Wing, Albany, New York 12234.

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Looking down the road, and hoping to widen it for all

Why ABE Math Assessment Practices Must Change

Editor's Note: This article is reprinted from The Problem Solver, a publication jointly funded by SABES and the Department of Education. The edition from which this article was taken was designed to introduce and reinforce changes in mathematical assessment practices as encouraged by the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks document (primarily the ABE portions). The Problem Solver pages include materials developed by the three Frameworks Math Assessment Study Groups from Boston, The Northeast and West Regions. Much of the edition focused on potential assessment tasks and actual Frameworks-based assessments performed as part of the study group exploration.

by
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Assessment is a key component of curriculum. It initiates the academic teacher-student relationship and guides instructional decisions in the best of circumstances. Currently, the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks, encompassing the Mass. ABE Math Standards and the NCTM Math Standards, calls for teachers to heighten their awareness of curriculum decisions which may have become or can become automatic, almost unconscious and too-often homogenized to serve institutional needs, not student needs. Teachers are asked in the Frameworks to reform their mathematical teaching practices, including their assessment methodologies.

The Frameworks and Standards beg teachers to open up their questions, integrate academic skills and pique critical/creative thinking in their courses, their teaching. And all these changes are urged in the belief that students can be better served by teachers familiar with the nuances, ambiguities and potentials of mathematics. However, the Frameworks recognize that it is impossible to illuminate a course of study without accurate, informed and comprehensive assessment of student knowledge and learning which by rights should drive the curriculum.

A teacher must know what mathematics each student understands in order to serve well that student. To figure out what is known and what is not, how a person learns and what blocks his or her learning, requires assessment of a sort far different from that which has traditionally been practiced; it requires an 'assessment mindset' that, yes, utilizes new tools, but more importantly is exercised diligently/insightfully, regardless of the problem, test or task used. The evolution in assessment asks teachers to think deeply about mathematics and about students *all the time*.

"Every mathematical activity can

become an opportunity for assessment," note teachers engaged in exploration of Frameworks-based assessment.

Both the Frameworks and the NCTM Standards champion an evolution in assessment practices, an evolution in which careful, criteria-based analysis and collections (portfolios) of students' work, not just a compilation of their percentages or positions on the bell curve, becomes the standard procedure used to determine what a student knows, at what level (s)he comprehends what is known and what scholastic attitudes or intellectual behaviors are exhibited. This evolution assumes an awareness of lesson objectives and an investigation of students' meeting, exceeding or confusion with these objectives in order to inform subsequent instruction.

Frameworks-based assessment requires teachers to know what it is they expect students to learn from or demonstrate via a particular lesson. Random selection of activities, whether to keep students busy or to entertain them, is viewed as counterproductive. A clear vision of students' knowledge base and direction for future development is required. That is, the teacher must know the student and the subject in order to develop or locate appropriate materials for instruction and assessment.

When assessing students, teachers are advised to ask:

> ***What skills, knowledge, and academic behaviors do I want my students to express, and what tasks will provide evidence of these?***

The emphasis here is on establishing criteria to prove mastery. Does the student understand concepts, techniques, algorithms, etc., and can (s)he apply this knowledge flexibly and appropriately, and, finally, what criteria will establish for teachers valid proof that a student knows the concepts, techniques, algorithms, etc. or possesses academic habits of thinking?

Documentation of investigation results is necessary, just as recording numbers and case notes has been. Only now what is recorded is information relative to specific curriculum objectives, especially as articulated in the Frameworks and the Standards. Is the student a flexible problem solver? Can the student coherently communicate the mathematics embedded in a problem? Does the student apply previous knowledge to a new situation? The answers to these questions, as demonstrated on particular tasks or in exploration projects or in portfolios, are the informational foundations of Frameworks-based academic assessment. (It must be noted that academic assessment always operates within the larger gestalt of assessment which for devoted teachers involves assessment of students' physical, psychological and spiritual statuses as well as mental or academic status.) These informational foundations are built to help teachers better serve the academic needs of their students.

And it is assumed that every ABE (Adult Basic Education) teacher wants to serve her or his students in the best manner possible. Every adult educator wants his or her students to be successful, to get what "they came for" and to feel better about themselves as they become more confident in their abilities. These are the ABE teacher's rewards. Moreover, all ABE instructors know the bottom line for many funding sources and the basic goal of most students is attainment of the GED certifi-

The teacher must know the student and the subject in order to develop or locate appropriate materials for instruction and assessment.

cate. The GED certificate is accepted as recognition of general academic achievement. But for too many students achievement of the GED with a minimum score in mathematics leads to educational and economic stagnation. It is not sufficient preparation for what comes later. Minimum competency is not enough; it is not serving students in the best manner possible.

By aligning itself with the K-12 teachers and administrators who are developing Curriculum Frameworks and Alternative Assessment Practices, the Massachusetts Adult Education community seeks to dream a bigger dream for ABE students, one which unlocks the prison of poverty and social disenfranchisement. It seeks to clear paths to economic, social and personal growth which formerly opened only for those prepared by a college-prep or advanced technological prep high school program. It says getting by by the skin of your teeth is not enough. It says, "We can help you learn to solve problems, imagine problems and discuss them with others."

ASSESSMENT DEFINITIONS

Webster's: appraisal (expert judgment of value or merit); estimation; to determine the amount or rate of something; evaluate (value or judge)

SABES Alternative Assessment Project: "The whole (alternative assessment) experience has been one of getting to know each other." Paul Trunnell

Teaching Exceptional Children: Special Needs: The "process of collecting information about individuals or groups for the purposes of making decisions." Ordinarily refers to testing, observation and interviewing. Results should help decide whether problems exist and if so, what to do.

NCTM: "The process of gathering evidence about a student's knowledge or, ability to use and disposition towards mathematics and of making inferences from the evidence for a variety of purposes." This process of describing what students know and do should be:

- *aligned with and integral to instruction*
- from multiple sources
- use methods appropriate for purposes
- check all aspects of math knowledge (investigation, formulation, representation, reasoning, applying a variety of strategies and shifting from mechanical to cognitive skill comprehension.

The purpose of ABE is not only to teach students a few tricks to get past the 'academic guards' in the GED Testing Office; it is to awaken learners who are alienated from the unavoidable world of academic ideals, and arouse those beginning to see the value of and power in the ability to read all genres, write coherently, calculate and problem solve with mathematics.

To awaken and arouse learners requires ongoing, informed, documented assessment of learning. Armed with such assessment information, every teacher becomes capable of leading students down their various paths to success.

The paths to achievement, economic equality and personal development are being widened by efforts like the Frameworks so people of all backgrounds can walk down them. Across the State, teachers and administrators seek ways to better prepare all students for the challenges known to lie ahead. These educational leaders realize that successful citizens are able to reason, solve problems, communicate and make connections throughout their lives. They know that when a student's creative intelligence and curiosity are allowed to flourish, that student plants her/his feet firmly on the paths to fulfillment and success. The determination of the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and the development of Frameworks-based assessment practices are efforts to help us all become better skilled, sharper thinking citizens who are able to question and develop solutions to problems.

Teacher and student reflection upon classroom work is integral to the process of improvement. The quality of thinking, the quality of interaction, the quality of expression of each student must be considered and then evaluated in order for learning to take place. In **this process of observation, examination, active reflection, consideration and evaluation which The Frameworks terms assessment, the intention is to better serve the individuals involved in educational development.** Percentages, bell curve positions and vague intuitions are not enough to prepare adult students of basic education for the demands of the 21st century. Teachers need to know what students truly understand and how they came to understand it if they, the teachers, desire to nourish the students' intellectual capacities and free them from the constraints of a limited education.

To improve students' abilities to maneuver in a fast-changing world, to broaden their horizons and stimulate the desire to understand more about themselves and that world which surrounds and influences them, **teachers have to listen and look deeply, discerningly, at students' mathematical utilizations and inventions.** This is what Frameworks-based assessment advocates. This Frameworks-based assessment process is neither easy nor simple, but it promises to clarify teachers' perceptions of student and to lead to more accurate and useful evaluations of students' accomplishments and needs.

☑

To awaken and arouse learners requires ongoing, informed, documented assessment of learning. Armed with such assessment information, every teacher becomes capable of leading students down their various paths to success.

ASSESSMENT DISCUSSION — WHO, WHAT, HOW AND WHY

Before beginning its experiments in Frameworks-based assessment, the West Group considered basic questions in assessment such as "Why do assessment?", "When?", How does one assess?", "Who performs assessment?", and "What is being assessed?" Below is a brief synopsis of 'answers' brainstormed by the group.

Why and When

- To place people; enroll or refer
- Determine learning disabilities or learning styles
- Determine where help is needed
- Requirements (funding and program efficacy)
- Inform instruction
- To see what has been learned
- To build confidence
- To have a reality check
- To Determine aptitudes/ strengths
- PRE, ONGOING, POST

Who

- Teachers
- Administration (agency, state, fed.)
- Society
- Students (self or peer)

How

- Standardized instruments (GED pre-tests, ABLE, TABE, etc.)
- Dialogue — informal between students or between teacher and student
- Observation
- Thought protocol (formal)
- Projects (long term or short term)
- Journal reflections
- Learning logs
- 'Tasks' (problems)
- Worksheets

What

- Thinking processes: inductive, deductive, logical, intuitive, linear, non-linear, confused, scattered, perseverant
- Learning styles
- Knowledge: algorithm mastery; concepts such as denominator, ratio/proportion, etc.; assumed general knowledge such as weeks in a year; math facts (both recalling and applying)
- Comprehension — basically language
- Problem Solving — flexibility, group process, critical thinking, application, extension

What Counts

Graphing the Average Rent of Athol, Orange, and Greenfield

The following problem was presented to a GED class in Athol by Peg Reidester of F/HETC who subsequently wrote an analysis of the task context and outcome as well as an assessment of one student, Esther, using the Student Assessment Rubric developed by a Frameworks group in western, MA of which she was a part. Her text and rubric results demonstrate a level of quality possible in the expanded assessment process the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks favors.

In her assessment process, Reidester examines the task, the student's performance and her own presentation of the task in order to determine hat route her instruction will follow in the days/ weeks ahead. The use of the Student Rubric allows her to pinpoint Esther's strengths and weaknesses, so in subsequent lessons these can be developed and reassessed to determine both Esther's real progress and the efficacy of lessons presented to her. The Rubrics instrument eases the in-depth analysis process while forcing Reidester (and any who use it) to establish the criteria on which she is basing her assessments. Perhaps most importantly, the rubric is a concrete report on which to base discussions with students about academic progress and needs

THE PROBLEM TASK:

Using the Greenfield Recorder newspaper, find the average rent for a one bedroom and a two bedroom apartment. Graph your results. Answer these questions using the graph.

1. Is a two bedroom apartment in Greenfield more or less than a two bedroom apartment in Athol? By how much?
2. Which town has the lowest average rent for a one bedroom apartment? For a two bedroom apartment?
3. Where can one find the highest rent for a one bedroom apartment?
4. What is the difference between the cost of a one bedroom and a two bedroom apartment in Orange?

by
Peg Reidester

Franklin Hampshire
Employment and
Training Consortium
Athol, MA

REIDESTER'S ANALYSIS

Context: This exercise was done mainly to reinforce the skill of averaging numbers which the class had been working on for the previous two weeks. It was also used to see which students had any experience with graphing and interpreting graphs (sort of a pre assessment). In addition, it was used to give the students the opportunity to use real life numbers and situations in math class.

Outcome: It was soon obvious to me that Esther was not at all familiar with making graphs. She needed a lot of assistance and did not show a sense of the detail required when setting up a graph. For example, the spacing is off: The bars are not separated by a fixed number of units. Also, when labeling her axes, she wasn't specific enough. Someone trying to interpret the graph would have some difficulty. I believe these problems come from her lack of familiarity with graphing, but she could have a problem with arranging things in space, as well. I would want to work with her more on this to determine which it is.

Esther's computation skills proved adequate for this assignment. She was able to calculate the average rents and subtract whole numbers. She didn't pass in a data sheet with her graph, though, which may indicate a lack of awareness of the connection between data and graphs.

Conclusion: I think this exercise was a good assignment. It provided me with information on the students' abilities to collect and organize data, compute averages, graphs and interpret graphs. Next time, I wouldn't use it until I had done some practicing with graphing beforehand because I would like to see students perform the entire exercise as much on their own or with the help of each other as possible.

☑

Average rent on 1 and 2 bedroom apartments.

1. How much more is a 2 bedroom in Greenfield than Athol?

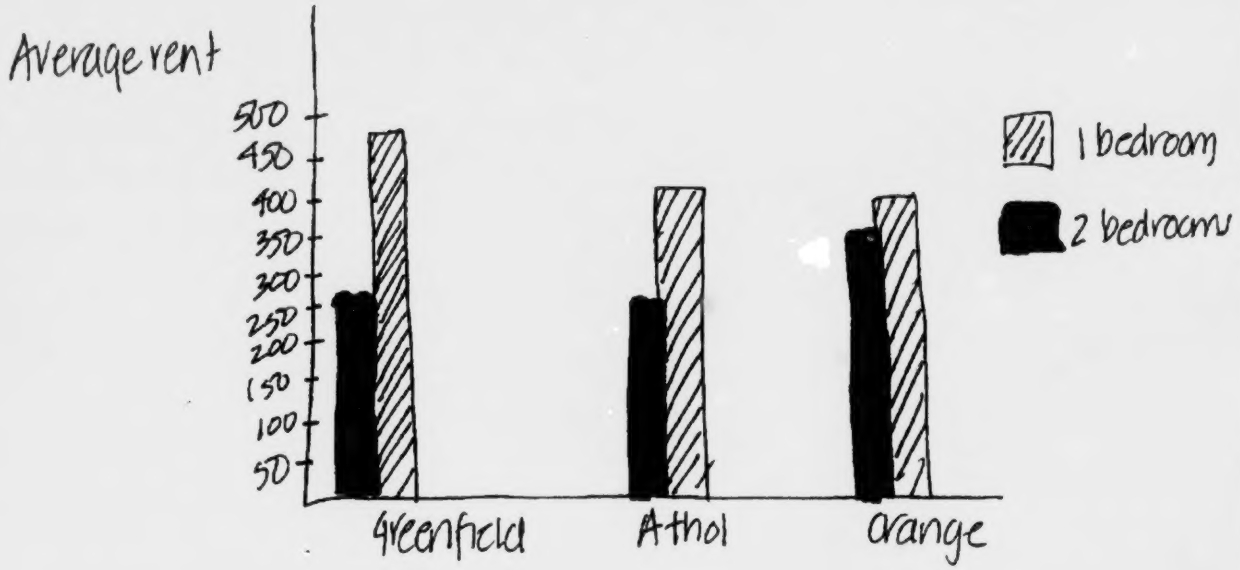
$$\begin{array}{r} 475 \\ 430 \\ \hline 45 \end{array}$$

$45.00

2. How much less is a one bedroom in Greenfield than Orange?

$$\begin{array}{r} 375 \\ -\ 225 \\ \hline 150 \end{array}$$

$ 150.00



STUDENT ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

Name: Esther

Assessment Task::Graphing Average Rents

Date: 5/12/96

Skills Assessment:
3 - mastery 2 - demonstrated use 1 - unused or misused

Skills Assessed in Task	Competency Level
1. Computation (subtracting whole numbers, dividing)	2
2. Finding the average	2
3. Comparing averages	2
4. Following directions for setting up graphs	2
5. Using a graph to answer questions	2
6. Recording data	3
7. ________________	
8. ________________	

Partial list of skill types to be assessed:
computation—two-digit multiplication, etc.; solving equations;
notation—student use and student comprehension;
communication—vocabulary comprehension or use;
expression of probabilities; coordinate placement; measurement conversion;
formula use; pattern recognition or description; finding a percent;
locating numbers on a number line; simplifying fractions...

STUDENT ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

Name: ______________________________

Assessment Task:: ______________________________

Date: ______________________________

Skills Assessment:

3 - mastery 2 - demonstrated use 1 - unused or misused

Skills Assessed in Task **Competency Level**

1. Computation (subtracting whole numbers, dividing)
2. Finding the average
3. Comparing averages
4. Following directions for setting up graphs
5. Using a graph to answer questions
6. Recording data
7. ______________________________
8. ______________________________

Partial list of skill types to be assessed:

computation—two-digit multiplication, etc.; solving equations;
notation—student use and student comprehension;
communication—vocabulary comprehension or use;
expression of probabilities; coordinate placement; measurement conversion;
formula use; pattern recognition or description; finding a percent;
locating numbers on a number line; simplifying fractions...

HABITS OF MIND EXHIBITED

3 - highly visible *2 - evident* *1 - not evident* *0 - N/A*

Affective Domains Assessed in Task	**Expression Level**
1. Persistence (sticks with problem)	2
2. Curiosity (engages in problem)	2
3. Flexibility (attempts alternative solution methods)	0
4. Thoroughness (checks answers, responds to all questions, compiles sufficient data)	2
5. Creativity (unique approaches responses or presentation)	0
6. Cooperation (shares ideas and materials, listens)	2
7. Communication (states ideas clearly, asks appropriate questions)	1
8. Reasoning (shows logical and/or intuitive reasoning; inductive and/or deductive reasoning; proportional; generates hypotheses)	1
9. Problem solving (uses a variety of strategies and/or appropriate Strategy; poses interesting, sensible problems)	1

Strengths/Difficulties exhibited:

* reading comprehension * choosing strategy * computational accuracy
* choosing operation * efficient w/time * procedural knowledge
* extending or applying knowledge

General Comments:

Esther easily recorded the data on rents and had no trouble computing the average which had been previously been new to her. Obviously, she has progressed here, though the exercise did not make clear whether or not she understands the distinctions between mean and median. She needed a lot of guidance for the graph which indicates a lack of familiarity with graphing. Her spatial sense of the graph was weak.

Recommendations: ______________________________

____

Overall Assessment (Math)

1 - needs prior skills/concepts *2 - needs practice* *3 - ready to progress*

HABITS OF MIND EXHIBITED

3 - highly visible *2 - evident* *1 - not evident* *0 - N/A*

Affective Domains Assessed in Task **Expression Level**

1. Persistence (sticks with problem)
2. Curiosity (engages in problem)
3. Flexibility (attempts alternative solution methods)
4. Thoroughness (checks answers, responds to all questions, compiles sufficient data)
5. Creativity (unique approaches responses or presentation)
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9. Problem solving (uses a variety of strategies and/or appropriate Strategy; poses interesting, sensible problems)

Strengths/Difficulties exhibited:

☐ reading comprehension ☐ choosing strategy ☐ computational accuracy

☐ choosing operation ☐ efficient w/time ☐ procedural knowledge

☐ extending or applying knowledge

General Comments: ____

____

Recommendations: ____

____

Overall Assessment (Math)

1 - needs prior skills/concepts *2 - needs practice* *3 - ready to progress*

Book Review

Assessment Package Offers Useful Resource for Novice and Experienced Practitioner Alike

by
Jeanne Kearsely

City College of
San Francisco
San Francisco, CA

Collaborations Assessment Package
Level: Beginning 1, Beginning 2
Heinle and Heinle Publisher
A Division of International Thomson
Publishing, Inc.
Boston, MA 02116
Author: Cathy C. Shank

Teachers working in non-credit or workplace education programs face the ongoing challenge of accounting for or demonstrating student progress. Quantifying student progress on a form acceptable to funders and or program administrators can be challenging. Standardized or commercially available tests, which produce funder friendly numbers, are inappropriate to most learner-centered, non academic, adult education programs. Consequently, instructors create their own assessment tools to more accurately test students on the content and instructional methods utilized by their programs. The difficulty of translating the test results into a more usable form for the number of audiences remains, however. The assessment package from the Collaborations series presents a possible solution to this task.

Collaborations is a five-year series designed for the non-credit, adult education program. The series is based on the tenets of a learner-centered and holistic approach to ESOL instruction. In addition to the students books', workbooks, teachers' manuals and supplemental materials, each level also includes an assessment package. The package is intended to be used in conjunction with the Collaborations series. Its design is generic enough, however, to be used independently of the series.

The materials in the assessment package do not break any new ground in the area of authentic, learner-centered assessment. The majority of its instruments and assessment procedures are fairly traditional, like the initial intake interview and the cloze passages, and have been used in adult education programs for many years. The author does highlight the use of portfolio assessment as a separate alternative section.

The material is clearly presented and the tools can be adapted by an entire program or as needed by classroom instructors. Flexibility in a commercially-prepared assessment instrument is extremely important and rare. The package covers all aspects of the student assessment process: initial, ongoing, and mid- and end-of-level assessment.

Examples of self assessment techniques and course evaluation forms are also included in the package. The content of the forms can be readily changed to reflect the material covered by a specific class or program. I particularly liked the author's concrete suggestions for incorporating various assessment practices into everyday classroom routine, for example pair work, interviewing and reporting, and information gap exercises. These are all valid forms of ongoing assessment.

While students are engaged in these activities the teacher is free to circulate and evaluate students. The author also makes a point of identifying activities that teachers may already use in the classroom and suggest ways of incorporating them into the assessment process. I think it was brilliant and I wish she had developed the point further.

Another strength of the assessment package is that it is extremely comprehensive. Charts throughout the package clearly illustrate the content, uses and skills tested by the various instruments. The forms, scripts and scoring keys are clear and comprehensible. These forms are duplication ready and accompanied by very explicit instructions. Clear and basic instructions are essential for practitioners with limited experience implementing non-academic assessment tools. Some of the author's advice may seem too basic — "remember to smile" and "make students feel welcome and comfortable." Sometimes, though, these small details that we assume everyone knows need to be explicitly stated for the benefit of newcomers and experienced practitioners alike.

In many ways the assessment package is similar to a survey course of "learner-friendly" assessment practices, theories and techniques. I particularly like that the author included a brief synopsis of the theory behind many of the practices she utilized. A clear correlation between theory and application is particularly helpful to those new in the field. Unfortunately, as happens with most survey courses, the treatment of the subject matter can at times seem somewhat superficial and overly simplistic.

I found this to be particularly true when the author gives advice for orienting low-level students to less traditional initial intake and ongoing assessment procedures. For example, suggestions such as "use facial expressions, body language and demonstrations" are not particularly helpful when a teacher is trying to convey the potentially confusing concepts involved in portfolio assessment. Teachers working with very low-level students who want to use alternative methods of assessment need more practical and concrete advice.

Overall, the Collaborations Assessment Package is a very useful resource for classroom teachers and program coordinators. I think the assessment package would be particularly helpful to individuals who have limited experience creating or implementing assessment tools in non- academic or workplace learning situation. It is a well presented collection of assessment tools easily accessible and implemented by either experienced or novice practitioners.

☑

Learner-centered

approaches

to assessment &

evaluation

in adult literacy

Volume 10

adventures in ASSESSMENT

december 1997

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SABES

System for Adult Basic Education Support

SABES is the System for Adult Basic Education Support, a comprehensive training and technical assistance initiative for adult literacy educators and programs. Its goal is to strengthen and enhance literacy services and thus to enable adult learners to attain literacy skills.

SABES accomplishes this goal through staff and program development workshops, consultation, mini-courses, mentoring and peer coaching, and other training activities provided by five Regional Support Centers located at community colleges throughout Massachusetts. SABES also offers a 15-hour Orientation that introduces new staff to adult education theory and practice and enables them to build support networks.

SABES also maintains an adult literacy Clearinghouse to collect, evaluate, and disseminate ABE materials, curricula, methodologies, and program models, and encourages the development and use of practitioner and learner-generated materials. Each of the five SABES Regional Support Centers similarly offers program support and a lending library. SABES maintains an Adult Literacy Hotline, a statewide referral service which responds to calls from new learners and volunteers. The Hotline number is 1-800-447-8844.

☑

The SABES Central Resource Center, a program of World Education, publishes a statewide quarterly newsletter, "Bright Ideas," and journals on topics of interest to adult literacy professionals, such as this volume of "Adventures in Assessment."

The first three volumes of "Adventures in Assessment" present a comprehensive view of the state of practice in Massachusetts through articles written by adult literacy practitioners. Volume 1, **Getting Started**, *includes start-up and intake activities; Volume 2,* **Ongoing**, *shares tools for ongoing assessment as part of the learning process; Volume 3,* **Looking Back, Starting Again**, *focuses on tools and procedures used at the end of a cycle or term, including self, class, and group evaluation by both teachers and learners. Volume 4 covered a range of interests, and Volume 5,* **The Tale of the Tools** *is dedicated to reflecting on Component 3 tools of alternative assessment. Volume 6,* **Responding to the Dream Conference**, *is dedicated to responses to Volumes 1-5. Volume 7,* **The Partnership Project**, *highlighted writings from a mentoring project for practioners interested in learning about participatory assessment. Volume 8 covered a range of topics from education reform to learner involvement in assessment. Volume 9 looked at assessment in a volunteer program, native language literacy, ESOL programs, and evaluations in workplace education programs. In this volume, many different practitioners offer their view on alternative assessment and the BEST.*

We'd like to see your contribution. Contact Editor Alison Simmons to discuss your submission.

Opinions expressed in "Adventures in Assessment" are those of the authors and not necessarily the opinions of SABES or its funders.

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adventures in ASSESSMENT

Learner-centered approaches to assessment & evaluation in adult literacy

Volume 10

Editor: Alison Simmons
Assistant Editor: Rick Schwartz
Cover Design: Marina Blanter

December 1997

Introduction

Volume 10: Time to Reflect

by
Alison Simmons

Editor
SABES Central
Resource Center/
World Education

As the new year approaches we are filled with anticipation about what lies ahead for *Adventures in Assessment* and alternative assessment. Since this is the tenth volume, I guess I am feeling compelled to reflect a bit and revisit the purposes for *Adventures*. In Volume #6, Loren McGrail talked about the origins of the journal and the purpose and audience she had in mind when she started it in 1991. She wrote:

"... in addition to providing a framework and a forum for alternative assessment, I saw the creation of a field-based journal as a golden opportunity to put into practice a process approach to writing, a way for practitioners to experience first-hand the power of having their writing responded to with non-evaluative feedback... All authors commented on the self knowledge they gained by the act of writing itself. I had underestimated the power of writing to reflect back to us what we really think and believe. And...I was surprised to hear, repeatedly, the desire many authors expressed to connect with others so they could get feedback on their own practice.... I am also struck by some authors' clarity about the need to get this information out... "I wanted to support the cause for alternative assessment and remind people that there are other options to the TABE."

Adventures in Assessment was always intended as a staff development journal for authors reflecting on their own experience and sharing with others, as well as for readers interested in looking at other ways to do assessment in their programs and classrooms. When I am on my annual journey in search of adventurers to write about their practice, I am struck by the number of practitioners who feel they have little to offer others in the area of assessment. Although, I hear about a lot of great ideas, tools and questions, it is hard to convince people that they have a lot to offer and can write about a process, an idea, or a question without having the ultimate answer.

For those who do not know already, there is *not* a clear bright light at the end of the assessment tunnel that will resolve all the many dimensions of assessment that are inherent in our classrooms and programs. What each teacher/practitioner *can* offer is their take on assessment and the ways in which they come to terms with the many challenges assessment poses. This may take the form of tools, ideas, questions or a review of other materials. It is these ideas and this format that make *Adventures in Assessment* unique among the journals and books on assessment. I feel we have continued in the spirit with which Loren began this journal and hope we do not to lose sight of *Adventures'* importance as a field-based journal for teachers and practitioners in search of an adventure in assessment.

What might the future hold for *Adventures in Assessment*? As the standards-based initiatives take hold both nationally and statewide (Equipped for the Future, Curriculum Frameworks, Skill Standards for Workplaces, etc.) , it will be interesting to watch how the field responds to these initiatives and how it looks at and defines assessment. Will these initiatives help us develop a common language and common expectations for outcomes? Will we align our instruction and assessment practices with the standards? *Adventures in Assessment* seems more relevant now as we enter a time of content standards and outcomes from our field, as well as other fields that define what our learners should know and be able to do. *Adventures* will continue to offer a forum where practitioners can document their practices and we will see where these experiences take us.

This tenth volume of *Adventures in Assessment* has a great assortment of writers looking for ways to integrate assessment into their current teaching/learning.

Marta Mangan-Lev writes about authentic assessment and cooperative learning. We look at how she applies the principles of one educational theory to her classroom and the principles of authentic assessment. She believes that our assumptions about teaching and learning should integrate our instructional methods with our assessment practices.

Maria Kephallenou talks about her experience at the Haitian Multi-Service Center in Boston. She looks at questions and issues that constantly surface in her program around assessment, the complex nature of assessment in a multi-service center, and her view of assessment as she moved from teacher to administrator.

Judy Chau asks us to think about what we assess and whether we are too focused on skill areas and spend less time with fewer, less tangible skill areas. She offers us a peer evaluation tool for interviewing that focuses on those less tangible areas.

Martha Jean takes a look back at her EGAP assessment tool that has been used and adapted by other teachers in the field. She talks about the minor adjustments made partly due to her work in Learning Disabilities and Multiple Intelligences.

Sylvia Greene, Nancy Hoe and Lally Stowell take us on a trip through the assessment process in their family literacy program. What seems like miles and miles of assessment protocol is really a very comprehensive system that aims to look at the whole learner and cover all the areas where they are making progress. What struck me about this piece was that all of the information gathered near the beginning of the learners' time at the Center is used to help students identify their goals for learning. Their initial assessment reveals areas of strengths and weaknesses, then the information is used to help students write goals and objectives.

The **Operation Bootstrap Health Team** assesses community health needs at an adult education program in Lynn, MA. After an initial assessment, the team develops a program for the students centered around a topic. Along the way, students assess the effectiveness of their program as well as how they are working within the team.

Kathy Sikes (interviewed by Melody Schneider) talks about her experience implementing and training volunteers in the use of portfolio assessment.

Beth Bingman from the University of Tennessee gives us an update on the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy's (NCSALL) assessment/outcomes research.

In **Voices From the Field** practitioners look at the Basic English Skills Test (BEST). **Moira Lucey** gives us a history of the BEST and valuable information about its design and purpose. **Barbara Lippell-Paul** looks at the BEST from an historical perspective and helps us to look critically at what the test is asking us to do and what some of the issues are with administering the test.

Dulany Alexander looks at the BEST by comparing the profiles of two ESOL students. **Rachel Donnelly,** a VISTA volunteer, relates some of the insights she has had as a "beginner" with the BEST.

Cathy Coleman in **Learning from Experience** reflects on the use of the TABE (Test of Adult Basic Education) in her program. She suggests questions to consider when using a standardized test but mainly to question if the test is a good fit with what your learners and program want to accomplish.

In **What Counts?, Ken Tamarkin** offers a way to look at assessment in a computer class at Malden Mills. He looks at tools he uses for placement, progress, and program evaluation. He involves students from the beginning in developing and understanding the assessment process.

Finally, **Caroline Gear** looks at the book *Phenomenal Changes: Stories of Participants in the Portfolio Project* as a staff development tool. In the first of two articles, she shares with us how she and her staff are using the book to help them in their work on portfolio assessment.

It is a full volume of tools and ideas. As always we welcome your comments and suggestions. If you wish to submit an article or respond to an article in this issue, feel free to contact me at the address below. The authors would appreciate your feedback and ideas.

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The Connection between Cooperative Learning and Authentic Assessment

by
Martha Mangan Lev

Valley Opportunity
Council
Chicopee, MA

Assessment. Evaluation. The words conjure images of tests — sharp #2 pencils, rows of bubbles to be darkened in, quiet rooms with perspiring test-takers and only the sound of rustling paper. I'm learning, along with my learners, to replace these dated images with a reality that conforms more with my values about teaching and learning. We're learning to use authentic, learner-centered tools which integrate assessment into the cycle of teaching/learning. We're learning to use assessment as a tool for self understanding and instructional planning.

There are other, equally-dated images I can conjure from my educational experiences: straight rows of wooden desks, one behind the other; a teacher's desk facing the rows of students; a teacher, talking, talking, and writing on the broad expanse of a blackboard, occasionally calling upon a student to supply an answer, with luck the correct one.

My classroom doesn't look like this. We start out seated around a horseshoe of tables, each learner facing the others. We often work in cooperative groups, for which learners pull chairs into small clusters to work together. My position is not at the front of the room lecturing (well, maybe once in a while), but usually circulating among learners engaged in using language, engaged in learning. We're learning to create and work in a learning environment in which learners work together cooperatively to achieve shared goals.

Cooperative learning in the adult education classroom offers some valuable opportunities for authentic assessment. In my work with cooperative groups and authentic assessment I have learned there are many parallels between the two. This has made it easier to integrate them. To see this more clearly we will first look at some principles of cooperative learning.

THE STRUCTURE OF COOPERATIVE LEARNING

If you were to survey teachers of adult education about their use of groupwork, nearly all would probably respond that they often have people working in groups. In my ESOL classes learners may work in groups formed using a number of random techniques: counting off by 3s or 4s; distributing three or four different pictures and then forming a group with those who have the same picture, choosing a topic (for example, a kind of music or food) and then grouping those who made the same choice. While learners work together in these groups for conversation or to complete a task, they are not explicitly cooperative. Cooperative groupwork is distinct from work in small groups:

- learners work in **positive interdependence,**
- each participant has a **clear and specific role,**
- the **process** of working together is an important focus,
- participants **reflect upon and analyze their work together.**

A cooperative model of groupwork is structured in these specific ways. The role of the teacher is to set up those structures by considering these questions: What will learners do? What role will each learner play? How will they reflect upon their work together? Equally important, the teacher considers the personality, skills, and learning style of each learner to form groups that can work together effectively. Next, she/he facilitates the formation of the group and observes them in action. Finally, the teacher provides learners with a means to reflect upon and evaluate their group's work; that is, she incorporates assessment tools.

About now, you may be thinking, "Yikes, I've got 30 minutes to plan tomorrow's class. Let's just count off by 3s and talk about the weekend. We can work cooperatively sometime when I've got a day or two to plan!"

It's true that the most extensive work of the teacher is in planning cooperative interactions, in setting up just those conditions outlined above. It's equally true that there's a learning curve in developing and honing our skills as facilitators of cooperative learning; the initial time investment is significant. As we become more adept at the process, it takes less time.

We find the same is true of using authentic assessment. We can opt to use 'quick and dirty' standardized tests, or can invest the time to develop authentic assessment tools that also collect information about learners' skills, learning styles and personalities.

The payoff for investing in these two approaches is significant. Teaching and learning are enhanced as learners acquire the habits of reflecting upon their learning and working with others. Our teaching, by integrating on-going feedback from learners, also becomes more relevant and meaningful in learners' lives.

One way to simplify the planning of cooperative groupwork is to think of it as three sets of variables to be sorted and matched: 1) the content and process of the task to be carried out, 2) the attributes of the learners to be grouped together, and 3) the assessment component: the tools learners will use to reflect upon their experience.

Content/process of the task

This is a starting point for any lesson planning. What exactly will learners do together? What skills will they learn/practice? What are the goals of their work? What roles can group members fill in order to achieve the goals? With the possible exception of the last, these questions underlie any lesson planning. In this sense, the planning is the same, although the task will be tailored to the structure of a group working cooperatively. While appropriate roles will vary according to the nature of the activity, there are a number of frequently relevant roles which can also be customized to the particular activity. The level of support for each role—checklists or other ways to clearly specify what the learner will do in that role—can be adapted to suit the level(s) of the learners.

Possible roles to assign may include an observer, a questioner, a timekeeper, and a summarizer and facilitator.

Observer: watches the work of the group, often equipped with a checklist of specific behaviors to look for (e.g., does everyone speak? Are all ideas treated with respect?).

Questioner: asks questions of one or more participants. This learner could also be provided a list (e.g., of question words [who, what, etc.], or of specific questions).

Timekeeper: keeps the group within time limits set or agreed upon.

Summarizer: may sum up the work of the group herself, or may present a group-developed summary to the class.

Facilitator: helps the group accomplish its agreed-upon tasks.

Grouping Learners: Attributes of Learners to be Grouped Together

The next piece of the puzzle is learner attributes. As I get to know my learners, I pay attention to their individual differences in an on-going process of assessment through observation. I use this information to mix and match qualities to increase a group's success. ***Learner Skills*** are one set of attributes: language, leadership, facilitation, etc. Another variable is the ***consistency of attendance***, which will be particularly relevant for groups working on a project over time.

Native language should be taken into consideration: would the task be best accomplished in a group as heterogeneous in language as possible, such that more interaction would take place in the target language? Or would learners benefit from the ability to perform parts of their task in a shared native language?

Learning style in general will be an important factor in group interactions, and particularly an individual's preference for working independently or with others. Finally, but not least importantly, the mix of ***personalities*** in a group will affect its success. A group in which each member tends to be quiet and shy may have trouble getting going.

Vignette:

A group from my Level One class is a wonderfully-varied and complex group of learners. Su, from Korea, has very good listening, speaking, and reading skills, though her pronunciation is sometimes difficult for others to understand. She engages enthusiastically in all tasks and attempts to involve others. Panay, from Laos, is very quiet and reluctant to speak. She has a good sense of humor and understands most of the classroom talk. Jay, from the Philippines, is the youngest member of the class. He also has very good language skills, but is easily distracted from a task. The fourth member of the group, Dorota, a very new speaker of English, tends to be quiet. She has little confidence in her skills but is determined to learn English.

The configuration of this group meant that English is their only common language and they sometimes struggle to communicate. Su often takes leadership in getting their work started, but Dorota also pays attention to keeping them on task. Panay sometimes shyly teases Jay, who enjoys the playful interactions. The group works well together.

As I get to know my learners, I pay attention to their individual differences in an on-going process of assessment through observation. I use this information to mix and match qualities to increase a group's success.

AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT IN COOPERATIVE GROUP WORK

So, okay, you've worked out some group tasks, figured out roles that you hope will work to accomplish them, and made some initial groupings of learners. What about assessment? What information have you already gathered? What will you now assess? How?

Through the structure and process of cooperative learning learners use a wide range of skills. These skills include:

- **language/content** skills used to accomplish the group's goals, both in what students do and how they do it,
- **taking/following leadership**, to participate in any of the various roles, and to to-

gether move a group to achieve its goals,

- **negotiating** with each other when different ideas are being considered,
- **problem solving**: clarifying ideas, elaborating the ideas suggested by others, or seeing the consequences of particular solutions,
- **reaching consensus**, a specific and not widely familiar decision-making process that honors the opinions of all involved to come to an agreed-upon outcome,
- **synthesizing/summarizing** in order to present the group's work, or to facilitate its on-going work,
- **observation/analysis**, identifying what is to be observed and how to understand what one is seeing, and
- **giving feedback** to other learners or to the instructor about the group's process, the task, and other aspects of the groupwork.

Not only are these skills critical to effective groupwork, they will also enhance success beyond the classroom, in the workplace, and in the community. Those skills more related to process, to how we work with others, are seldom explicitly elicited in classroom work and are even less often evaluated by 'traditional' assessment. By developing tools to use in the cooperative classroom, learners can get feedback on their skills in these areas as well as develop them.

Authentic Assessment Tools

So you've got some groups that are, with support from you, working together well. You're helping learners identify and develop skills, such as those listed above, in the course of their cooperative efforts. What tools can you and they use to reflect upon and evaluate their work? Here are some suggestions.

- ***learner questionnaires** (see box)*. In their simplest form, these ask learners to choose a response. For more advanced learners, questionnaires may also ask for more extensive responses.

How did your group work together tonight?

Name: ____________ Date: ____________

What did your group do today?

____

Circle one

I feel ***good*** ***not good*** about my group today.

I talked ***a lot*** ***a little*** in my group.

Other people talked ***a lot*** ***a little*** in my group.

My group helped me learn ***a lot*** ***a little*** today.

My group got ***a lot*** ***a little*** work done today.

- ***teacher or learner observation.*** The observer may use a checklist and record the frequency of particular events or may watch for specific behaviors.
- ***checklists.*** Completed by teacher and/or learners, they may include specific content skills in the task or specific cooperative skills.
- ***reports/presentations to the class.*** In a variety of forms (charts, skits, talks, etc.), these provide a concrete work product.
- ***evaluation of groupwork products.*** What did the group make/present/etc.? How does it compare with their goals?
- ***learning contracts.*** These provide goal-based evaluation of personal, group, or content goals.

A variety of these tools can and should be used over time. Different tools will appeal to different learners and elicit a range of perspectives on the process and/or the product of the work. This assessment should include both learner and teacher input. A growing desire for me is to support learners in developing tools for reflection and evaluation of groupwork.

As is usually true of authentic assessment, what teachers and learners learn from these tools can be translated into content for subsequent groupwork. If an issue is identified as a particular strength or weakness, groupwork can be designed to address this. For example, if one of the roles is that of 'summarizer' and groups report difficulty in carrying this out, class instruction can increase learner understanding and skill in subsequent groupwork. As teachers and learners become more adept in the process, the cycle of groupwork to reflection to instruction to groupwork becomes increasingly meaningful and on target.

Cooperative groupwork provides an opportunity for learners to express and build a range of social and intellectual skills. The principles of authentic assessment —

- that it be learner-centered and help learners achieve their goals,
- that it be part of the learning experience,
- that it use a variety of procedures,
- that it provide feedback that will lead to better instruction

— are consistent with those guiding cooperative learning and make it the appropriate technique for reflecting upon and evaluating this process. Together, cooperative learning and authentic assessment are powerful tools for understanding ourselves as learners and as teachers.

☑

Assessment in ESOL

The Haitian Multi-Service Center Experience

by
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The Adult Education Program at the Haitian Multi-Service Center (HMSC) has developed a programwide assessment process that responds to the needs and demands of our program. As part of the on-going development of this process we have found that assessment is an important programmatic issue that continually needs to be addressed. As we develop and refine our process, we ask ourselves numerous questions and address many issues about our processes and assessment in general. We always face new challenges and new perspectives on how to use assessment more efficiently.

Some issues arise time and time again. In a class of 15 students with varying educational backgrounds, individual needs, ages, priorities and language skills, for example, assessment of progress is difficult Students do not progress at the same rate and the same time. Also, individual skills do not progress at the same rate. How do we account for all these different skills and factors and assess progress? Most likely, teachers begin by focusing on the skills: they compare a starting point — the beginning of the class — with the point of time of the final assessment. The different factors (backgrounds, schooling, age, etc.) are then taken into account to better understand and explain why progress was/was not made.

Another issue deals with the movement of students from one level to the next. Generally, a student is ready to move up when an overall better understanding and use of the language is demonstrated. It includes an initial assessment for the student, a point of time later with another assessment and a comparison between these two. However, "an overall better understanding and use of the language" is very vague. For example, how does one assess it? Is it the same for all students or are there variations? If so, how does one account for them? And how does it tie to the progress of individual language skills? Because teachers think differently, it is amazing that most students move with few problems.

When we talk about student progress at our meetings, the discussion is dynamic with contributions that generate plans to address issues. The discussion becomes difficult, however, when we explore ways to capture all of these dynamics in a form that is simple and easy for students to understand and for other teachers to translate.

Resolving this issue depends largely on one's position in a program, the purpose and need for assessment, and how it fits into the whole program. Everybody agrees on the importance of assessment for the students, the teachers, and the program, but we all have different perspectives on its purpose.

A Student's Perspective. Students assess their progress continually as an integral part of learning and as a guide. Assessing progress for them may also imply active participation and responsibility for their education. It is like checking where they are according to their plan and where they need to go to next. An articulated plan always helps as a point of reference. In our program we make efforts to help students articulate a plan through counseling.

A Teacher's Perspective. Through assessment, teachers can address different issues such as: methods and effectiveness of their teaching; effectiveness of teaching styles with students of different cultural and educational backgrounds; the specific needs and goals of a student; their own beliefs about what constitutes progress; a specific student's abilities and strengths; and the student's capabilities and progress versus the capabilities and progress of the rest of the students in class.

An Intake Worker's Perspective. An intake worker assessing and placing students must have a pretty good understanding of the range of classes, as well as their curricula. Without this understanding, accurate assessment and successful placement of students is extremely difficult. The intake worker seeks to find out whether a particular student shows signs of skills and capabilities usually shown by students who have been placed in a particular class/level. These skills/capabilities are considered as a "starting point," but only to determine placement and to ensure a smooth immersion of the student in the system. The rest is left in the hands of the counselor and the teachers.

A Counselor's Perspective. A counselor's assessment involves working closely with students to help them set realistic goals, set a time frame in which these goals can be achieved, quantify progress in and outside of class (job search, resume, referrals, further education, etc.) and offer appropriate programmatic response to expressed needs: referrals for drop-in babysitting, referral to another department for information and/or concrete assistance, etc. Assessment at this level does not really deal with specific language skills, but rather how mastering language skills is relevant to the overall life, educational, and vocational plans of the students.

An Administrator's Perspective. An administrator's view about assessment addresses programmatic concerns, such as class size, outcomes, attendance, terminations (especially if terminations are not job and education related), etc. An administrator may use assessment to (a) measure and assess the effectiveness of the program, (b) capture and document outcomes, (c) project numbers and outcomes for the future, and (d) make the program (curriculum, assessment, teaching methods and materials, etc.) better respond to students' needs for progress. As an administrator, I look for confirmation that the program offers its students what we believe it does: the necessary tools to achieve their educational and vocational goals and to move on to social and economic self-sufficiency.

Having been a teacher not too long ago, I still recall the perspective of a teacher. As a teacher, I thought of assessment in a very limited way: it had to do with my students and my class — not necessarily with the whole program — and it was as much about my students as it was about my teaching and the materials I was using. Often, I considered assessment a burden, a task I had to do and once completed nobody would take another look. As a result, I completed the relevant forms but I was neither detailed nor very explanatory. Going back now to some of those assessments I think they were poorly written and would not be of much help to others.

My perspective on assessment as an administrator is a lot broader than that as a teacher; I have a clearer and deeper under-

I believe that assessment is a process that does not remain static but evolves together with the program because it is the thread that connects and keeps all the components of a program in place and in check: teaching, curriculum, outcomes, goals and counseling.

standing of the program as a whole and how its various components support and complement each other. I also have a better picture of what the program is expected to do according to our proposals and funders' expectations. When I review a teacher's assessment of a student, I expect to see that the teacher knows and understands a student's progress. The student's self-assessment and the teacher's assessment should be close. I expect the student to express some satisfaction with the class, progress made, and his/her teacher. If the teacher identifies problem areas, I expect to see a plan that addresses them.

Through the assessment, too, I have an indication if the teacher's work is effective. Effective teacher's work means to me that the teacher has put some thought into developing a curriculum and preparing for his/her class, and knows the strengths and weaknesses of his/her students. Student attendance, drop out and termination rates, and enthusiastic (or not) student comments are also indicative of the class in which active learning takes place.

Another important purpose that assessments fulfill is enabling students to participate in the educational process by assessing their progress. I value their assessments and opinions and take them into account when I assess the effectiveness and work of the program. There is a strong connection between assessment and program functions, such as outcomes, curriculum development, and teaching methods. Just like the students, the program must reflect upon its operations and assess its effectiveness and results. These results should feed back into the program and lead to decisions that will improve the program and benefit its students.

I believe that assessment is a process that does not remain static but evolves together with the program because it is the thread that connects and keeps all the components of a program in place and in check: teaching, curriculum, outcomes, goals and counseling. Unfortunately, many times, due to lack of resources and restrictions of time, we do not utilize assessment as a tool for check, change and improvement to its fullest.

THE HMSC EXPERIENCE

Capturing the dynamics of all assessments and accounting for all different perspectives, purposes and issues may take many creative forms, especially because most funders require that the program incorporate initial, on-going and final assessment of students' accomplishments, but do not require any particular assessment tool. At the HMSC we have developed in-house assessment tools to capture the information we need and answer the questions we raise. They include intake/placement; counseling: orientation and goal-setting; student/teacher conferences: initial, ongoing and final; and exit/entrance criteria checklist.

Intake/Placement Assessment

The Intake worker determines the level/class in which students should be placed using the placement test. The placement test was developed by the program with the assistance of Loren McGrail through a SABES mini-grant and includes: (a) applications, (b) an oral interview to determine the students' speaking/listening capabilities (at this point initial assessment for non-literate students also takes place), (c) reading materials to determine the students' reading capabilities (reading materials include materials for different levels and a variety of topics; the test includes comprehension questions, writing the story in students' words and/or responding to the ideas expressed), (d) writing, which includes either responding to the reading or writing about students' experiences, and (e) a grammar test may be given to students depending on their level (see "The Toolkit for Authentic Assessment" from SABES for a detailed description and relevant forms).

This assessment, although not the only one developed, may be unique and exceptionally successful in placing students: students choose to work with the reading(s) they like or think are difficult or easy enough for them. The reading and writing materials are culturally sensitive (all are pieces of writing written by students at the HMSC) and so offer the students a familiar frame of reference. The students also have the freedom to choose the topic they want to write about. During the time they take the test, they are supported, guided, and helped by a bilingual intake worker. This intake/placement is time consuming, taking an average of 50 minutes to two hours. The intake worker needs approximately 15 to 30 minutes to read through and assess the level.

Counseling

The second assessment comes after the level of students is determined and before they enter class. The Program Counselor meets with students individually for approximately one hour to address two issues: program orientation and goal-setting.

Program orientation. This includes necessary information about other services that the HMSC offers, support services (e.g., drop-in day care, referral to other agency departments for services), information about elective classes that the Adult Education/ESOL Program offers, program policies, and specific information about the class the student will be placed in (times, where the class meets, and who the teacher is).

With the orientation, students feel they are part of a bigger agency with additional available services. This initial meeting introduces the role of the counselor to provide support to the teachers outside of the classroom and provide needed information and referrals to students to help them accomplish their goals.

Goal setting. The counselor completes the Educational/Vocational Plan with the students. This document includes background educational and employment information about the students and includes their long- and short-term goals, as well as personal goals (this document has been updated to include information needed for the DOE MIS system).

More often than not, students find it very hard to set goals. It is especially hard for low-level students to articulate specific goals besides "to learn English." The counselor is instrumental in engaging them in a discussion on why they need to be in an ESOL class (or in any other class for that matter) and he helps them to articulate goals. The counselor has to lead this discussion carefully (a balance of articulating real needs and imposing them) because the students should set their own goals, not the counselor. The skills to set short- and long-term goals take a long time to develop as they include certain language that the counselor — and the student — must master.

The counselor is instrumental in engaging [students] in a discussion on why they need to be in an ESOL class, and he helps them to articulate goals. The counselor has to lead this discussion carefully because the students should set their own goals, not the counselor.

Student/Teacher Conferences

In these conferences, progress and evaluation are discussed by both parties. The conferences may take many forms depending on the level of the students (lower level classes may have more group-like meetings) and time. Ideally, they are held three times each session. The student/teacher conferences consist of three parts: initial, on-going, and final.

Initial. The first conference takes place within the first two weeks of the students' placement in a class (either right after intake/placement or after movement from another class). The relevant document is completed by the students and identifies their specific goals for the session. The difference between this goal-setting and the goal-setting with the counselor is that the students think of goals that are achievable in a short period of time — the teaching session. These goals tend to be geared more around what they perceive as weaknesses and needs.

On-going. The second conference occurs around the middle of the session, or/and any time that is deemed necessary or useful for the teacher or the students. The document has two parts, one that is filled out by the students (their evaluation of their progress and goal achievement) and one by the teacher (the student's evaluation of progress). Often, the students talk about possible problems with their learning, with teaching and materials, etc. These problems are addressed by the teacher and possible solutions are explored.

Final. The last conference takes place during the final week of each session. It, too, has two parts: one that is filled out by the students and one by the teacher. The students are asked to evaluate themselves in terms of progress and goals accomplished or not; give examples of their progress; reflect on whether they have different or additional goals after attending the class; and evaluate the program's help and support in accomplishing these goals. The teacher is asked to provide a formal evaluation of the students' progress in terms of each of the applicable basic skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing, computer literacy, math) and to provide an evaluation of students' attendance throughout the session.

The purpose of this assessment is to provoke discussion, thinking, and evaluation and become a learning experience for both parties. The teacher's input and opinion is as valued as that of the students'. Through the discussion, the students become as responsible for their learning as the teacher is for his/her teaching. This assessment, too, is time consuming. It is discouraging, however, that the forms often do not capture all the rich discussion that they may invoke either because the teachers do not write enough/well or the students view their part as not very important or both. It is very frustrating to read assessments of progress that are poorly written and that do not give a clear idea of where the students stand in terms of learning and progress. They do, however, add to the incredible amount of paperwork accumulated through the years.

Exit/Entrance Criteria Checklist

Student/teacher conferences may involve the use and completion of the exit/entrance criteria checklist when a student is ready to move from one level to the next one. As its name suggests, a checklist summarizes the capabilities/skills mastered in a class by students, and, at the same time, summarizes the capabilities/skills needed for those students to advance to the next class. (There are as many checklists as there are classes.) The checklist is completed by the teacher.

A checklist can, in a short time, quickly display the most important aspects of teaching at one level and the capabilities of the students and, at the same time, can reveal the capabilities of the students as a starting point for the more advanced level. These checklists are curriculum-driven as they include skills that are taught/required in each level. Checklists by themselves are weak evaluative tools. In reality, a checklist is only one element taken into account when evaluating students before they move to a more advanced level (samples of their work, especially writing, and the initial in-class assessment by the new teacher ensure the right decision).

Despite the problems mentioned (time consuming, some resistance on everybody's part to keep up with all this paperwork that results in very poorly written assessments, etc.), assessment is a very important aspect of a program, a crucial tool for evaluation and self-evaluation, and an important part of teaching because it touches all aspects of a program and can be used to confirm and validate findings about the program, its services, and its students.

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[Author's note: "I wanted to acknowledge Alison Simmons for her assistance in the thinking and writing of this article."]

STUDENT EDUCATIONAL VOCATIONAL PLAN

Student's Name:
Counselor's Name:
Date of Orientation/Counseling:

I. PLACEMENT IN PROGRAM

Native Language Literacy:
ESOL Class:
Pre-EDP/EDP:
Counseling/Orientation (date):
Math:
Computer Training:
Other (specify):

II. BACKGROUND

1. Education:

2. Previous Job Experience:

3. Skills:

III. POSSIBLE REFERRAL (from, to, date, reason)

IV. STUDENT GOALS

1. Educational Goals

a. Complete a class

b. Speaking
Communicate more effectively in English
-understand and feel comfortable in a conversation
-have a conversation with other people
-communicate with people on the phone
-understand the TV
-understand movies
-understand the news

c. Reading
  Be able to:
    -read a newspaper
    -read a book
    -read maps, calendars
    -look up a word in a dictionary
    -find information in the phone book

d. Survival
  Be able to:
    -call 911 effectively
    -make doctor's appointments
    -give out personal information

e. Writing
  Be able to:
    -give personal information (name, address, phone #)
    -letters (to friends, for business)

f. Obtain EDP
  -Complete tasks (specify)

g. Obtain GED
  -Pass some tests (specify)

h. Complete some adult HS credits

i. Enroll in Post-Secondary Education

2. *Vocational Goals*
  a. Enter vocational training (specify)

  b. Gain Employment

  c. Obtain Job Advancement

  d. Perform New Job Requirements

e. Be Removed from Public Assistance

f. Fill out applications

3. *Personal Goals*
   a. Read more to children

   b. Increase parent/child interaction

   c. Help children with homework

   d. Enroll in activities that support public school

   e. Receive preventive health care

4. *Community*
   a. Enroll in Civics class

   b. Receive US Citizenship

   c. Register to vote for first time

   d. Involved in activities within own community

   e. Incarcerated adult return to society

V. NEEDS DETERMINED TO ACHIEVE GOALS

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

VI. STUDENT OUTCOMES (to be completed upon termination)

1. Termination Date:

2. Level started (include SPL):

3. Made progress within same level (include SPL):

4. Highest level completed (include SPL):

5. Found Employment
(Place, Job Title, Phone Number, Starting Date, Salary)

6. Upgraded Employment
(Previous Job Title, Current Job Title, Finished Relevant Training -where?-)

7. Entered Skills Training
(Where, for how long)

8. Entered Higher Education
(Where, what program)

9. Became Citizen
(When)

VII. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

STUDENT-TEACHER CONFERENCE

Student's Name: ______________________________ ***Date:*** ___________
Teacher's Name: ______________________________
Class Level: ______________________________ ***Time:*** ___________

INITIAL EVALUATION

1. Why are you in this class? Why do you want to learn English?

2. How many years of education do you have altogether?

3. Do you have a high-school diploma (from Haiti or another country)?

4. Do you have any skills (for example, do you know how to use a typewriter or a computer, etc.)?

5. If you want to go to college, have you decided what you want to study?

6. Do you have any questions about this program or your class?

STUDENT-TEACHER CONFERENCE

Student's Name:________________________ **Date:**_________
Teacher's Name:________________________
Class Level:________________________ **Time:**_________

ON-GOING

1. Do you feel that you are making progress? Do you feel you are making progress in:

   -Listening and understanding

   -Speaking

   -Writing

   -Reading and understanding (readings inside and outside of class)

   -Pronunciation

   -Computers

   -Math

   -Grammar

   -Other

2. If you feel you are making progress, how do you understand it? (Give some examples, please).

3. If you feel *you are not making progress,* why is it so?

4. Is there anything you want to change in your class?

5. Is there anything you want to do more in class?

6. Do you have any questions about this program or your class?

STUDENT-TEACHER CONFERENCE

Student's Name: ____________________________ ***Date:*** ___________

Teacher's Name: ____________________________

Class Level: ______________________________ ***Time:*** ___________

FINAL EVALUATION

Progress Assessment

For Students: In what areas did you make progress? How do you know? (Give examples from your class and outside of class, please).

For Teachers: In what areas did the student make progress? How do you know?

Reading:

Writing:

Speaking:

Listening:

Pronunciation:

Grammar:

Word-Processing:

Math:

Other:

Attendance: Regular (75%) Yes No (If no, please give reason(s))

Overcoming Cultural Barriers of a Job Interview

by
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Never overlook the obvious. This is what I continue reminding myself. After three years of coaching students in a prevocational education program to prepare for job interviews, particularly "white-collar" job interviews, I find myself backtracking and focusing much more with students on the basic presentation aspects of interviewing.

While our program is open to the non-native speaking population of Greater Boston, the typical profile of an Asian American Civic Association (AACA) Prevocational Skills student is a Chinese or Vietnamese female, in her late 20s to early 30s, who has worked as a stitcher, cashier or waitress in a Chinatown business since arriving in the United States. The students are high-beginners or low-intermediate level. The average current length of residency in the U.S. is two or three years.

Most students have a very solid work history in their country, having worked for a single employer for up to ten years. Many have had excellent skills, as teachers, bookkeepers, secretaries, bank tellers, business owners, doctors, tour guides, or hotel clerks. They are mature, with a stable work history and many transferable skills. The main barriers are limited English, difficult acculturation, and a lack of computer skills, confidence, and – for some – adequate daycare. Most are very employable individuals who typically do not see themselves as employable beyond Chinatown. This is one great barrier – especially since many usually summarize their goal as "I want a good job, an office job".

Enrollment typically consists of twenty students who are divided into two equal groups. Classes run 16 hours per week. Although not an office skills training program, the students are taught the basics of keyboarding and basic word processing functions of Microsoft Word. They practice math and learn the English necessary for the mathematical skills which they possess. They study grammar for two hours per week, but ESL is intertwined in all course matter. In addition to aiding students with these basic skills, the task of the three prevocational teachers is to assist them to accept themselves as employable outside of Chinatown. They participate in self-assessment activities to recognize their strengths. The Case Manager works with the students on an ongoing basis for five months, both in workshops and individually, to develop goals and follow their action plan.

My responsibility is divided into ten weeks of conversation, culture topics, writing skills, and pronunciation, along with ten weeks of introducing U.S. culture as it relates to the world of work. The greatest challenge: to prepare students for a "white-collar" job interview. The goal of the enrollees is to either find a full-time job after the five-month class period, or to enroll in a full-time training program. Typically, up to 80% opt for the training program; this may be the Office Systems Training Program at AACA, or others throughout the city of Boston.

Herein lies the challenge. Within those months, the students must feel confident and ready for either a job or training. Whether preparing for a training program interview, or preparing for a job interview – white-collar or not – the challenges remain the same: the candidate must appear confident, describe and "sell" their skills and experience, and explain their motivation and goals.

The problem lies in the fact that most do not feel confident, cannot adequately describe their skills, have no knowledge of the Boston job market and have not developed long-term career plans which they could express to a Human Resources professional. So, on the larger scale, proficiency in English, a realistic view of the current office job market in Boston, the necessary keyboard and computer skills to obtain an office job, and a plan are paramount to achieving their goals.

Less evident, yet equally as important to the process, are the presentation skills which native speakers of English are coached on at University Career Centers, Massachusetts One-stop Career Centers, or by employment specialists. They are the handshake, volume, eye contact, and the all important ability to "sell yourself" at every opportunity. These are the deeper, cultural aspects of Western-style interviewing which my students repeatedly inform me go against cultural propriety. In addition, in the case of students from mainland China, jobs were assigned by the government, and they have never experienced what we know as a job interview. The lack of experience with interviewing, and the cultural differences are very evident as they come to interview for a slot in the Prevocational Program.

As a Prevocational Instructor, I am a member of the seven-person Employment and Training team at AACA. The entire team participates in the intake process. Applicants may be directed in one of four ways in AACA. They may be accepted to either Prevocational Skills or to Office Systems. Candidates who need much more remedial English are referred to ESL class. Those who test with high conversational skills and extensive office experience in their homeland are referred to the AACA Job Developer.

During the intake process of potential Prevocational or Office System students, we are assessing many factors, from eligibility requirements including low-income status, residency, and having a work permit, to their English level, and to their commitment to the objectives of the program. With respect to selecting who studies in which program, it often comes down to our determination of their apparent understanding of cultural expectations in the intake interview and their confidence in themselves. Candidates who come across professionally, who smile, give a strong handshake, have good eye contact, and are willing to try to define their work history will typically be accepted to office skills. Realistically, by learning the appropriate office skills, they will be job-ready in five months. In general, these candidates have lived for some time in the United States, and have somehow become acculturated to many of these interviewing factors. They still have to strengthen these skills, but they are well on their way.

So, on the larger scale, proficiency in English, a realistic view of the current office job market in Boston, the necessary keyboard and computer skills to obtain an office job, and a plan are paramount to achieving their goals.

The typical Prevocational candidate will rarely extend their hand to the teacher/interviewer. We extend our hand first. The handshake which we receive is the classic "dead-fish" handshake, described in how-to interview books. It is limp, with little or no grasp. Often it is a two-fingered shake, or "a slider," which slips through our fingers before we have a chance to grasp it. During the first week of class, we begin to practice the handshake.

It is approached from the cultural aspect first. Students learn that it is appropriate protocol within the business world to do so. Women are assured that they are crossing no boundaries to shake hands, especially with a man. They learn the cultural interpretation of a weak handshake that human resource professionals emphasize: a weak handshake is a sign of either a weak character, or a weak body — or both. Either way, these are less than desirable traits in a employer's confident, competent, healthy workforce.

Three years ago, I felt that a bit of practice and a cultural explanation would be enough to make students aware of the need for a great grasp. I felt as though I would belittle my students to continue to review this point. I have since discovered how culturally difficult this seemingly simple act can be. The students have listened to many human resource specialists who have come as guest speakers and have emphasized this point. They have practiced with the H.R. specialists, they practice at least once a week in class, and during the 19th week of the program, as students actually experience their first complete mock interview with a true interviewer rather than a teacher, most will have the handshake down. There will still be a few limp hands. My mistake three years ago was believing that I would insult my students by emphasizing this point. I discovered that I was not doing them a favor by failing to demand consistently strong handshakes.

Clearly, a firm handshake is only a piece of the outside package. Equally important is for the eyes to meet. Maintaining eye contact throughout a thirty-minute interview takes practice for any person who may be less than comfortable in an interview. Coupling that with the fact that in Chinese and Vietnamese culture direct eye contact in a formal situation such as a class or a job interview is seen as disrespectful, this is our second obstacle to overcome. In the initial intake interview for the Prevocational Program, eye contact is no more than the fifty percent range.

And once again, it is first approached through a cultural perspective. Students list the implications of giving direct eye contact in a formal situation. They inform me that to do so is to be an affront. Words that they include are "rudeness" "arrogance" or "a challenge". They are then introduced to the American take on lack of eye contact — basic shyness and insecurity, possible boredom or lack of interest, perhaps avoidance of the truth to a particular question. The students are very surprised by these last two negative interpretations, but no miracles of eye contact come strictly with knowledge.

Throughout the twenty weeks, the students practice pair activities in which they observe each other's eye contact. Not being a formal instance such as speaking to a teacher or an interviewer, this is much easier. Although each student spends a total of eight hours per week with me, for twenty weeks, they usually still consider contact with me as "formal". On an ongoing basis I may sit down with a particular student in class one-on-one, and have a chat. During the chat, I will follow their eyes — up to the ceiling, down to the floor, toward that invisible spider on the wall. This is done in a good-humored way, and the students have some idea of how much their eyes travel in a one-minute conversation.

At the culmination of the job search skills segment of the Prevocational Program, the students participate in a 15 to 20 minute videotaped mock interview, generally with one of several Human Resources professionals who cooperate with AACA. Until the eighteenth week, when the students have an opportunity to view themselves on the video, eye contact remains a challenge. I find that it improves after the students take their taped interview home to review. Seeing is believing.

Volume is another "sales point" which we work on. Again, sitting face to face, in a formal situation, speaking with volume and emphasizing points emphatically, might indicate a certain boisterousness, arrogance or disrespect. Again, this point is worked on throughout the twenty weeks.

The students bring a blank cassette to class from week 15 onward. We spend the good part of three weeks practicing approximately 35 common interview questions. I act as interviewer, the classmates observe and make notes on a critique form. When initially playing back the tape, students note they hear *me* very clearly, but have trouble hearing themselves. We are sitting equidistant from the recorder. This method seems to help significantly, and students self-improve day by day; most are able to match the volume and energy of the interviewer. Others improve after they hear the same problem with volume reflected in the videotape. We do our best to improve awareness, and to increase confidence, but someone who is inherently shy may continue to be.

Although the handshake, eye contact, and volume are somewhat determined by culture, the main cultural barrier is the central requirement of Western-style interviewing: "selling yourself." In cultures where humility is a virtue, the concept of recounting past accomplishments and emphasizing strengths is a huge obstacle. The concept is a challenge. The English vocabulary is a challenge. Believing what you say is a challenge.

Students must be convinced that their work history in their home country is important. We find during the initial intake interview that candidates tell us only about their work experience in the United States, as if what went before is not valid. This is especially true for former professionals who realize that they may not practice their previous profession again, at least not on the same level.

To first introduce them to which skills are valued and sought in the world of office work, the students spend a week learning the want ad abbreviations, and reviewing the *Boston Globe* office job ads. The purpose of the exercise is twofold: first, to view the current job market realistically; second, to see which "hard and soft" skills are being sought.

They can clearly see in newsprint which hard skills or computer skills are being sought. This helps them set some concrete training goals. In addition, once they learn that basic soft skills such as teamwork, initiative, hard work, cooperation, honesty, enthusiasm are listed time after time in expensive advertising space, they begin to believe that they have something to sell.

We work for one week to develop the vocabulary of such "soft skills". Students practice giving vivid examples both in writing and orally. For example, one former student wrote, "I like to take initiative. I know that in the past, taking initiative helped me to advance in my job. One day, when I was working at an electronics company, the assembly line stopped working. My coworkers sat on the floor playing cards, waiting for the line to start. I thought this was a good opportunity to learn something. I asked my supervisor if I could see the other department working. I watched the other worker for more than an hour, and I thought I could do that. The next day, I told my supervisor that I was sure I could do that. The next week, I got a promotion to that department. I don't think that you can advance without doing extra things."

The next week is spent on "functional or transferable skills," or the "I am good at..." skills. Functional skills are things one can do well. We do the same review of the want ads, and look for key words such as "organize, analyze, instruct, sell, convince, motivate, prioritize, calculate, handle multiple tasks, plan, mediate problems." Again, we spend a week for students to develop the vocabulary appropriate to their experience, develop personal examples, and practice pronunciation.

The next three weeks consist of more vocabulary development and affirmation of their previous skills as something valid. This is done with the help of the Job Developer and the Case Manager. The three of us spend significant individual time to develop vocabulary for the third component, the "job-specific" skills. We trace their work history with a chronological form and choose the most appropriate terminology to accurately describe their experience. Having no experience as a seamstress, an accountant, or an acupuncturist, I cannot pull terminology from the top of my head. Developing occupational or professional vocabulary is a team effort, using occupational resource books.

To further reinforce and practice this vocabulary, the students will fill out up to ten Boston-area job applications in class. They will then develop a resume, and will format it in computer class. They will write basic cover letters in response to mock advertisements. Through all of these media, the students become comfortable with the vocabulary, and hopefully they also begin to see that they do have valid, valued skills.

Weeks ten to fifteen have carried us through the job market exploration, skills self-assessment, job applications, resumes, and cover letters. By this time they should have a great handshake, make consistent eye contact, project their voices well, believe that they have skills to offer, know how to describe their skills, and are realistic about which "hard" skills they must learn in a future training program.

Weeks sixteen to eighteen consist of daily practice of 30 to 40 common interview questions, including the areas of small talk, education background, work experience, work style/personal traits, career plans, and hiring details, such as schedules. They have a nightly homework assignment to prepare complete answers to three or four interview questions. The following day, as one student is interviewed on their personal cassette tape, the others observe and critique each other.

By this time, they have become very aware of the completeness of answers, the effectiveness of personal examples, volume, eye contact, posture, and general "sales ability." Having been together for almost 20 weeks, they are comfortable with each other and generally very supportive, yet they are often more critical of each others performance than I might be. This just indicates their awareness, and I love when

I see that.

They are ready for a full trial run. Members of the AACA Employment and Training Advisory Board are called in. These are most often Human Resource specialists from major area employers such as Fleet Services, BankBoston, New England Medical Center, MetLife. They interview those whose English skills are in the higher range, and who have a great deal of comfort by now with the interview process. Those who are still struggling with English and/or confidence are interviewed by Board members with Adult Education and ESL affiliations. We do not tell this to the students, so not to single them out. Clearly, these interviewers have strategies to ease them through the first interview.

By now, the students have been observing each other for at least three weeks. The mock interview takes place in a classroom observed by the teacher and up to 10 classmates, and it is videotaped. It is a highly artificial situation, but we hope the students will benefit from multiple forms of feedback. The students seem to consider it a rite of passage, and say that it is beneficial. Because there is no real job at stake, they just consider it a good opportunity to practice.

During the interview, classmates fill out peer-critique forms which are in the form of a checklist. In fact, they have been doing this informally during the past three weeks. They pass these to the interviewee after the class. At the culmination of the interview, the interviewee gives a self-critique, describing the basic level of comfort, explaining which questions were difficult, and suggesting how they might improve those answers in the future. By the students' own critique, it is clear how aware they are of themselves. When they can laugh and suggest improvements for themselves, I know that they are on the way to successful interviews in the future. This is a great sign of success.

The interviewer then gives a critique, explaining the strengths and weaknesses of the interview, and makes suggestions. The final critique is done by the teacher who focuses more on pronunciation difficulties with pivotal words, or grammar which may have impeded understanding. I write those specific words down, and they may ask me to practice with them, and to put it on their audio cassette later.

At twenty minutes per interview, plus time to critique, interviews may take three or four days to complete. The students applaud each other and release a collective sigh of relief. I then copy the videotape onto VHS, and students circulate that copy, often making their own tape.

Cycle after cycle, students tell me how they review their audiocassettes and video cassette, especially as they begin to graduate from other training programs and prepare for interviews. They have also used the videotapes to help instruct friends and family members about interviewing.

By spending almost 10 weeks on the actual process of skills self-assessment, job search skills, and interviewing we hope to prepare students for two options. The first is to seek employment directly from the Prevocational Program. Of course, unless they have work experience in a related field, and a certain competency with English, they will be seeking more basic entry-level service jobs. Secondly, for those who plan to continue on with training programs, we hope to give a comprehensive ESL-oriented view of the employment search process which will be used in conjunction with the more rapid-pace presentation of such skills in other city-wide programs where they may be studying with native-English speakers.

Clearly, a non-native speaker faces the same interview challenges as a native speaker. They face competition, nervousness, insecurity, and the need to prepare. Coupled with linguistic and cultural barriers, the prospect can be overwhelming. In preparing students for the process, we as ESL teachers should not be uncomfortable to emphasize the basics. If we do not, then who will?

☑

Peer Evaluation Form for ______________________________

	still needs work	adequate	well-presented
introduces self & handshake			
posture			
energy			
eye contact			
volume			
makes small talk			
talks about education			
talks about past employment			
explains interest in position			
talks about strengths and work style			
explains long/short-term goals			
uses good examples to clarify points			
asks appropriate questions about job			
says "thank you" & shakes hands			
in general, sells herself/himself well			

Comments ____

____

____

Where's the EGAP These Days?

by
Martha Jean

Community Action Inc.
Haverhill, MA

Maybe you remember when Martha Germanowski designed something called an Educational Goals Assessment Packet for learners in adult education classes for the homeless. The EGAP was designed to get a big picture of students' interests, to help learners focus on their goals, and to show their progress. It had an extensive checklist of reading, math and life skills, a goals page, a monthly review page, and a daily log.

This "big picture" benefited the teacher in her planning for a multi-level class. It benefited learners who could choose their goals, see progress on those specific goals, and then get positive feedback on their daily work. Like all teacher tools, parts of it wore out, parts didn't work well, and other parts proved to be "keepers".

A few years after its appearance, the EGAP, like Martha G., is in transition. Now, as Martha Jean, I am considering more EGAP modifications.

WHAT HAS HAPPENED OVER THOSE FIVE YEARS?

I started using the EGAP in my Pre-GED and GED classes because it gave those learners a sense of their own accomplishments, possible goals, and the same positive feedback. I added and then removed a Reading Interest Checklist that didn't tell me more than an existing intake question about how well a student reads. I kept and modified the Daily Log, Monthly Goals Review, and the Educational Goals Plan pages.

Because of my continual urge to make the EGAP more visually pleasing, over the years I've made some simple changes on all the pages, aided by computers. The lines have been removed and a clearer font used. Bold and italicized headers have been added. Because the options of "I know/do this," "I would like to know more now/later," "I understand this and I am ready for the next steps," added to student confusion, the latest model reads simply: I KNOW THIS__ and I WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THIS__. Students are told to check only what is important to them. Progress is reported in the Daily Log.

This reads as if I am using the EGAP. I am pleased to say that many teachers have used it or modified it for different classroom use over the years. But, I didn't use it at all this past year.

WHY NOT?

This year our students had extensive intakes and testing for the DOE SMARTT System. It seemed excessive to burden them with so much paperwork before they even got to be involved in learning. So, I set the EGAP aside to think about how to make it most useful in my GED and multilevel homeless education classes.

I also became part of a teacher research group about multiple intelligence. That added a whole new perspective about how I might want to help students know themselves, their strengths, and what they already know. I had a lot to consider for my next EGAP remake.

WHAT IS MY THINKING ABOUT THE "FUTURE EGAP"?

I don't want to overwhelm new class members, so I am going to break the EGAP into smaller parts to be completed by students over some weeks. I don't plan on removing anything; students and I like what it includes. But, to the checklist I will add skills related to music, movement, nature, spatial understanding, interpersonal and intrapersonal ability. My multiple intelligences research has shown me that these are equally valuable areas of knowledge. My research experience has also reminded me how learners benefit from time to talk about, share, and consider their options. The EGAP can be more than a checklist if time is given to explore the choices learners make. This will support learners' work to reach their goals.

The EGAP was designed as and at its core has remained, a tool for teachers and learners to identify what learners know and what they dream of knowing. There is a do-able goals plan and a daily chance to communicate successes, failures, hopes, and fears. There is a place for goals review and revision. Those have remained the same.

Changes happen whenever I or another teacher asks, "How is this working for the learners?" "Is this leading to some positive learning or is this more burdensome paperwork?" or "How can I make this work better?" Those questions continue to make the EGAP what it is and what it can become.

☑

My research experience has also reminded me how learners benefit from time to talk about, share, and consider their options.

EDUCATIONAL GOALS PLAN

THESE ARE THE EDUCATIONAL GOALS I WILL WORK ON WHILE I AM IN THE COMMON GROUND CLASSES:

1. ______________________________

2. ______________________________

3. ______________________________

4. ______________________________

5. ______________________________

I HAVE READ, OR SOMEONE HAS READ TO ME, MY EDUCATIONAL OPTIONS. I HAVE CHOSEN THE GOALS I WOULD LIKE TO START WORKING ON IN EACH CLASS.

______________________ ____________
SIGNED DATE

MONTHLY GOALS REVIEW

IN THIS MONTH OF _______ in 19___ I WORKED ON, COMPLETED, OR LEARNED THIS: ____
____
____

NEXT MONTH I PLAN TO DO THIS: ______________________________
____
____

- -

IN THIS MONTH OF _______ in 19___ I WORKED ON, COMPLETED, OR LEARNED THIS: ____
____
____

NEXT MONTH I PLAN TO DO THIS: ______________________________
____
____

- -

IN THIS MONTH OF _______ in 19___ I WORKED ON, COMPLETED, OR LEARNED THIS: ____
____
____

NEXT MONTH I PLAN TO DO THIS: ______________________________
____
____

- -

IN THIS MONTH OF _______ in 19___ I WORKED ON, COMPLETED, OR LEARNED THIS: ____
____
____

NEXT MONTH I PLAN TO DO THIS: ______________________________
____
____

EDUCATIONAL GOALS ASSESSMENT PACKET

PUT A ☑ NEXT TO YOUR CHOICES

I KNOW THIS **I WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THIS** **I KNOW THIS** **I WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THIS**

COMPREHENSION SKILLS

☐ READ AND WRITE MY NAME ☐

☐ READ AND WRITE MY ADDRESS ☐

☐ READ AND WRITE MY PHONE NUMBER ☐

☐ READ AND WRITE MY SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER ☐

☐ READ LABELS OR INSTRUCTIONS ☐

☐ READ / UNDERSTAND NUTRITION INFORMATION ☐

☐ READ A CALENDAR ☐

☐ READ A BUS SCHEDULE ☐

☐ READ A T.V. GUIDE ☐

☐ READ A PHONE BOOK ☐

☐ READ MENUS OR RECIPES ☐

☐ READ BILLS ☐

☐ READ MAPS ☐

☐ READ NEWSPAPERS ☐

☐ READ MAGAZINES ☐

☐ READ HEALTH INFORMATION ☐

☐ READ AND WRITE CHECKS ☐

☐ READ AND WRITE LETTERS ☐

☐ READ AND FILL OUT FORMS ☐

☐ READ TO CHILDREN ☐

☐ HELP WITH HOMEWORK ☐

☐ USE A DICTIONARY ☐

☐ READ NOTICES FROM SCHOOL ☐

☐ WRITE NOTES TO SCHOOL ☐

I KNOW THIS ☐ I WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THIS ___

GRAMMAR SKILLS

☐ CAPITALIZATION ☐

☐ PUNCTUATION ☐

☐ SPELLING ☐

☐ DEFINITIONS ☐

WRITING SKILLS

☐ WRITE IN A JOURNAL OR DIARY ☐

☐ WRITE SONGS ☐

☐ WRITE POEMS ☐

☐ WRITE FOR A NEWSLETTER ☐

I KNOW THIS — **I WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THIS**

☐ WRITE TO A NEWSPAPER ☐

☐ WRITE ADVICE TO OTHERS ☐

☐ WRITE THE GED ESSAY ☐

☐ WRITE WORK OR SCHOOL REPORTS ☐

LIFE SKILLS

☐ REGISTER TO VOTE ☐

☐ GET A LIBRARY CARD ☐

☐ GET A LEARNER'S PERMIT ☐

LIFE SKILLS

☐ UNDERSTAND WANT ADS ☐

☐ DO A RESUME ☐

☐ FILL OUT A JOB APPLICATION ☐

☐ UNDERSTAND WORK MANUALS ☐

☐ UNDERSTAND WORKPLACE BENEFITS ☐

OTHER GRAMMAR, WRITING, LIFE, WORK SKILLS I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW ARE:

____

____

____

____

MATH SKILLS

☐ ADDITION ☐

☐ SUBTRACTION ☐

☐ MULTIPLICATION ☐

I KNOW THIS — **I WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THIS**

☐ DIVISION ☐

☐ WEIGHTS/MEASURES (SCALE, THERMOMETER) ☐

☐ MEASUREMENT - STANDARD ☐

☐ MEASUREMENT - METRIC ☐

☐ TELLING TIME ☐

☐ DECIMALS ☐

☐ FRACTIONS ☐

☐ RATIO / PROPORTION ☐

☐ PERCENT ☐

☐ WORD PROBLEMS ☐

GED, WORK, COLLEGE SKILLS

☐ BE PREPARED FOR GED WRITING/ GRAMMAR TEST ☐

☐ BE PREPARED FOR GED WRITING/ ESSAY TEST ☐

☐ BE PREPARED FOR GED ARTS & LITERATURE TEST ☐

☐ BE PREPARED FOR GED SOCIAL STUDIES TEST ☐

☐ BE PREPARED FOR GED SCIENCE TEST ☐

☐ BE PREPARED FOR GED MATH TEST ☐

☐ JOB TRAINING MATH ☐

☐ USE A CALCULATOR ☐

☐ TYPE ☐

☐ USE A COMPUTER ☐

I KNOW THIS | **I WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THIS**

☐ COLLEGE WRITING SKILLS ☐

☐ COLLEGE MATH SKILLS ☐

☐ COLLEGE TEST TAKING SKILLS ☐

OTHER MATH, GED, WORK, OR COLLEGE SKILLS I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW ARE:

____

____

____

____

MATH/LIFE SKILLS

☐ UNDERSTAND PAYCHECK (NET, GROSS, S.S., ETC.) ☐

☐ COMPARE BENEFITS ☐

☐ SCHEDULE WORK HOURS ☐

☐ MAKE A BUDGET ☐

☐ SET SAVINGS GOALS ☐

☐ UNIT PRICE FOOD ☐

☐ FIGURE SALES TAX ☐

☐ COMPARE GENERIC & BRAND NAME ITEMS ☐

☐ FIGURE CAR EXPENSES ☐

☐ UNDERSTAND A BILL (PHONE, ELECTRIC, HEAT) ☐

☐ HOW TO SAVE ENERGY ☐

☐ FIGURE AN INSTALLMENT PLAN ☐

I KNOW THIS | **I WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THIS**

☐ FIGURE RENTAL COST ☐

☐ FIGURE REPAIR / REPLACEMENT COST ☐

☐ FIND DIMENSIONS OF A SCALE DRAWING ☐

☐ USE PASSBOOK/CHECKBOOK ☐

☐ FIGURE INTEREST ON SAVINGS OR LOAN ☐

OTHER

☐ USE A MAP…LOCAL ☐

☐ STATE ☐

☐ U.S. ☐

☐ WORLD ☐

OTHER MATH SKILLS I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW ARE:

____

____

____

____

OTHER

I HAVE READ THIS | **I WOULD LIKE TO READ**

☐ ADVENTURE ☐

☐ ANIMALS ☐

☐ ART ☐

☐ ASTROLOGY ☐

I HAVE READ THIS **I WOULD LIKE TO READ**

☐ CHILDREN ☐
☐ COMEDY ☐
☐ COMIC BOOKS ☐
☐ COOK BOOKS ☐
☐ CULTURE ☐
☐ CURRENT EVENTS ☐
☐ DRAMA ☐
☐ ENTERTAINMENT ☐
☐ EXPERIMENTAL ☐
☐ FANTASY ☐
☐ FASHION ☐
☐ HEALTH ☐
☐ EMOTIONAL ☐
☐ FIRST AID ☐
☐ HUMAN BODY ☐
☐ NUTRITION ☐
☐ HISTORICAL ☐
☐ HOBBIES (TYPE?) ☐
☐ HORROR ☐
☐ HUMOR ☐
☐ INSPIRATIONAL ☐
☐ INTELLIGENCE ☐
☐ JOBS ☐
☐ JUVENILE ☐

I HAVE READ THIS **I WOULD LIKE TO READ**

☐ LEARNING ☐
☐ MOVIES ☐
☐ MUSIC ☐
☐ MYSTERY ☐
☐ NATURE ☐
☐ OCCULT ☐
☐ PARENTING ☐
☐ POETRY ☐
☐ POLITICAL ☐
☐ RECOVERY ☐
☐ REAL PEOPLE ☐
RELIGIOUS/SPIRITUAL
☐ MYSTICAL ☐
☐ ROMANCE ☐
☐ SELF-HELP ☐
☐ SCIENCE ☐
☐ SCIENCE FICTION ☐
☐ SPORTS ☐
☐ SUSPENSE ☐
☐ TELEVISION ☐
☐ TRAGEDY ☐
☐ TRAVEL ☐
☐ WESTERNS ☐

How Much and What Kind?

One Family Literacy Program's Assessment Story

by
**Sylvia Greene,
Nancy Hoe, and
Lally Stowell**

Community
Learning Center
Cambridge, MA

The topic of assessment is a fascinating, challenging, and daunting one for any adult education program, no matter what its scope and setting. In the field of family literacy, however, assessment must broaden to include children as well as parents, and curriculum components such as parenting, parent-and-child time and home visiting along with the traditional conversation, reading, grammar, writing and math.

At the Cambridge Even Start program, we have tried to deal with these challenges by doing everything on the assessment map: standardized and non-standardized; group and individual; formal and informal; teacher and self. You name it, we do it: anecdotal running records, work sampling, conferences and I.E.P.s, journals, locked confidential files, open accessible portfolio files. The result is, as our local evaluator put it recently, we are "drowning in data."

If assessment is always a work in progress, the above-mentioned evaluator, Elizabeth Brach, is the latest chapter in our assessment story. (Elizabeth works for the Office of Resource Development and Assessment at the Cambridge School Department, directed by Barbara Black.) Every program should be so lucky as to experience an outside evaluator as positive, appreciative, fair, rigorous, professional, and willing to look at existing assessment protocols and ask hard questions. Our latest revisions and attempts to streamline owe a great deal to her.

Cambridge Even Start is a collaboration between the Cambridge Community Learning Center and the Cambridge School Department (primarily its Home-Based Early Childhood, Primary Education and Title I programs). Families attend five mornings a week from 9 to 12 at the Gately Shelter in North Cambridge, a multi-use city building housing youth programs in the afternoon and evening. Even Start is a "center-based" program in that most of the components happen in the same place at the same time; however, each family also receives a weekly hour-long home visit at a time convenient to them and their home visitor, and we also take some field trips off-site. We are designed to serve 30 Cambridge families a year. Since our beginning in 1993, we have served 84 families from 20 different countries speaking 12 different languages, reflecting the diversity of Cambridge.

For the parents, we offer an ESL class (Level 2/3 in the Community Learning Center's sequence) taught by Lally Stowell, and an ABE class (Intermediate/Pre-GED level) taught by Sylvia Greene, on Tuesdays 9-12, Thursdays 9-11, and Fridays 9-11, for a total of seven hours a week. Monday and Wednesday are for computer classes (taught by Javier Aponte), with parents coming one day or the other for three hours. On those days, other offerings are an hour-long phonics and spelling class, individual tutoring, group homework time, and time for parents to volunteer in the preschool class. Fridays from

11-12 we have a parent discussion/support group for ESL and ABE parents combined. Thursdays from 11-12 we have Parent and Child Time (PACT) involving all parents, all children, and all staff. Parent and child activities centered around a book, toy, or game are also the central focus of the home visits.

Our preschool class meets every morning from 9-12, and is open to children 2 years 9 months to kindergarten age. It is taught by Nancy Hoe, Estalina Rodriguez, and June Ramdewar. (We provide babysitting reimbursements for children under 2 years 9 months.) About half the parents have their children in our preschool class, and the others have their children in Head Start or other preschool settings, family daycare, or elementary school. We run from September to the end of July, and are open-entry, open-exit.

Even Start is staffed by two Co-Coordinators (Nancy is Early Childhood Co-Coordinator and Sylvia is ABE Co-Coordinator) who each administer half-time and teach half-time; three half-time teachers (Lally who works with Sylvia, and Estalina and June who work with Nancy); a 10-hour-a-week computer teacher (Javier); and a Harvard Graduate School of Education intern and four volunteer tutors who help out in different parts of the program. Counseling is provided by the teaching staff and agencies to whom we refer parents as needed.

INITIAL ASSESSMENT

Parent

New families come to us in several different ways: through agency referral, word-of-mouth, cable TV announcements, targeted AFDC mailings, and so on. Over the telephone, it is usually possible through evaluating conversational ability and asking a few questions about previous education to determine whether the parent is more appropriate for Lally's ESL class or Sylvia's ABE class, or not appropriate for Even Start at all, in which case we try to refer the person elsewhere. This initial phone call is the first step in the assessment process.

Next comes an appointment with Lally or Sylvia, in the parent's home or at the Gately Shelter. A Community Learning Center registration form is filled out, yielding the usual demographic data, plus educational history of the parent, and goals the parent chooses for themselves from the range provided on the form (which is useful, but not complete). A separate Child Intake Form is filled out, to be discussed later in this article. At this point, the ESL and ABE initial assessments diverge.

ESL: The next step in the ESL assessment is a teacher-made series of graded readings designed by teachers at the Community Learning Center that the parent reads aloud, with Lally asking set questions after each reading. She notes numbers of hesitations and mispronunciations, and level of comprehension, which are recorded on the form and filed eventually in the parent's folder. Based on this reading inventory and informal conversation with the parent, she determines if he or she is appropriate for her class. If the parent scores too low, Lally refers him or her to another class at the Community Learning Center — ESL 1 or ESL Literacy 1 (for people who are also not literate in their own language) — another adult education program, or, in some cases, loans a series of her own tapes to help the parent reach the level of her class. ("Too low" would mean ESL 1 level: someone who speaks hardly any English and would not be able to sit in a group of adults from many different countries and have a simple conversation about a topic like discipline or bedtime routines.)

There is no second form of this informal reading inventory to re-administer later in the year to check progress, so Lally, along with the ESL department at the Community Learning Center, will be working on designing new ESL assessments that have two forms, one for pre-testing and one for post-testing.

ABE: For ABE parents, Sylvia next uses two interest inventories: one is general, asking questions about the parent's work-related reading, writing and math needs, topics s/he likes to read about, what s/he does well, who s/he most admires, and where s/he would most like to travel. The second is a more specific menu of possible GED-type topics, divided into the areas of Science, Social Studies and Literature, which the parent can rank in order of interest. The topics are ones like the civil rights movement, poetry, stress reduction, geography of the Caribbean, and so on, that have been of interest in the past to many adult learners, not just GED students. (At Even Start, a majority of the ABE students are interested in getting a GED. The others want to improve their reading, writing and math, usually with job training or job advancement in mind.)

Next, the parent does a writing sample, and then with Sylvia analyzes it for strengths and needs using a checklist of writing components, including handwriting, mechanics, spelling, vocabulary, use of standard grammar, ability to stick to the topic, ability to combine thoughts and feelings, and so on. This is kept in the parent's portfolio folder, for diagnostic purposes and for comparison with later writing samples chosen by the parent to measure progress. The Community Learning Center staff is presently in the process of developing a "writing rubric" to facilitate wholistic scoring of writing samples, and Even Start looks forward to benefiting from this effort.

Usually, this is enough for the first meeting, as 1-1/2 to 2 hours have often passed. In the second session, the parent is given the Diagnostic Assessments of Reading, or DAR (Florence G. Roswell and Jeanne S. Chall, The Riverside Publishing Company, 8420 Bryn Mawr Ave., Chicago, IL 60631). This standardized but informal, individually-administered test yields grade levels and diagnostic information in five reading components: isolated word recognition, word analysis, word recognition in context, oral vocabulary, and silent reading comprehension, as well as spelling. A relatively short, flexible, easy-to-administer instrument, the DAR results in a profile extremely useful in designing instruction specific to the parent's needs. The instrument was chosen by the ABE Department at the Community Learning Center as most useful for looking at several components of reading.

We also give the TABE (Tests of Adult Basic Education, CTB/McGraw Hill, 20 Ryan Ranch Rd., Monterey, CA 93940) in order to satisfy our funders, be consistent with the Community Learning Center, and provide transition to job training centers that use TABE scores. We give the TABE Locator, then the indicated level of the test. (We give only the Reading subtest.)

Next comes the Community Learning Center's informal math diagnostic. As with the writing sample, Sylvia analyzes the results with the parent, noting strengths and needs using a checklist of skills ranging from basic computation skills up to geometry and algebra.

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The DAR, TABE and math diagnostic tests are all filed in the parent's locked, confidential file. This is plenty for the second session. At this point the parent can begin class.

The last step in initial ABE assessment happens after s/he has been in class a week or so. The Literacy and Numeracy Practices Questionnaire is a fancy name for a list of real-life reading, writing, and math survival skills, grouped into those used at home, at work, and out in the community. They include such things as reading the newspaper, figuring tips, writing a resume and filling out an accident report. For each skill there are columns for "Can do" already (and if so, "How often?" and "Easy or Hard?"), and "Would like to learn."

Based on the preceding information from all the assessments done so far, it is now possible to sit down with the parent and have an initial conference to set goals. Goals can be chosen from the "Needs work" column of the checklists for the writing sample and math diagnostic, from the "Would like to learn" column of the questionnaire, or the topics ranked high on the interest inventories. The form used for the conference in the ABE class (a different one is used in the ESL class) is on the next page.

All this assessment, then, leads to the parent's conference record, which informs both group and individual instruction and helps track progress. When a parent completes one of their short-term goals as stated on this form, he or she receives a certificate, a copy of which may go in their portfolio file.

Child

During the first meeting with the parent, a Child Intake Form is filled out for each child in the family aged seven or younger. This yields birthdate; parents' names; names, ages and school placement of all siblings; favorite activities; allergies; other services and agencies involved with the child; and the parents' goals for the child.

During the first home visit to the family, Nancy Hoe or the Home-Based Director (Ellen Grant Valade) takes a developmental history for each child aged seven or younger. They also give the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT), a well-respected standardized instrument which tests the child's receptive vocabulary and concept development.

Family

Soon after parents begin class, they are asked their goals for the whole family. These are often difficult to articulate, and require discussion and modeling in the Friday parent discussion group. Parents often take time to articulate their goals, so a list of examples from other parents is often helpful. (An example of a family goal is to spend more time together on the weekends.) Their goals are filed in their family portfolio folder. For each family, there are two sets of fairly comparable files, one kept inside a locked cabinet, and one in a portable milk carton on top of the cabinet accessible to parents and teachers. In each place, there is a hanging file for each family containing four differently-colored folders, one for the parent's adult class, one for each child seven or younger, one for home visiting and one for the family.

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CAMBRIDGE EVEN START
INDIVIDUAL EDUCATIONAL PLAN
and CONFERENCE RECORD FORM

Name ____________________
Date ____________________
Class ____________________
Teacher ____________________

1. I think my reading is ______________________________
   I think my writing is ______________________________
   I think my spelling is ______________________________
   I think my math is ______________________________
   I think my parenting (helping my children develop in a positive way) is
   ____

2. What goals would you like to work on in the next 5 months?

Goal	Date chosen	Date accomplished
Reading:		
Writing:		
Spelling:		
Math:		
Parenting:		

3. Teacher's goals for the student for the next 5 months:

Reading:

Writing:

Spelling:

Math:
(over)

	Teacher assessment	Self-assessment
4. Comments about attendance:		
5. Comments about homework:		

6. Previous test score: ________ (name of test) ________ (date of test) ________ (score)

Previous test score: ________ (name of test) ________ (date of test) ________ (score)(score)

6/97

ONGOING ASSESSMENT

Family

The most obvious ongoing assessment information is attendance records. We were keeping separate attendance forms for parents, children in our preschool class, and home visits; now we are consolidating these into one family attendance form to be filed at the end of each month in the locked family file. Also, family goals are updated every five months during individual conferences or in a parent discussion group.

Parent

Another obvious source of assessment data is a record of homework assigned and either completed or not completed. Discussion of both attendance and homework records is included in the conference. Conferences happen in January and June and include notation of goals met and setting of new goals.

The TABE is re-administered to ABE parents right before these conferences and discussion of (hopefully!) progress as shown by TABE scores is included. Lally uses a group of five parenting issues (such as discipline and giving children responsibility) for ongoing assessments every two months during the year. She pairs two ESL students to discuss the topic, then has them separate and write on the topic; discussion of these writing samples is part of her individual conferences.

ABE parents keep journals which they write in each Friday, answering two questions: "What did you learn in your adult class today?" and "Give an example of something you did this past week to help your child learn," the second question having been suggested by our first local evaluator as a positive, non-judgemental and open-ended way for parents to think about their parenting.

Copies of all writing samples are kept in the parent's accessible portfolio file, and at conferences can be compared using the same checklist used for the initial writing sample to show changes.

Since math instruction in the ABE class is by necessity individualized, each student has a running Individualized Math Record Sheet, with columns for book, page number, concept worked on, date given, and date received. These are kept in a folder in the classroom.

For each parent, Sylvia also keeps a running Teacher/Tutor Comment Sheet, where she or one of the volunteer tutors who help in the classroom can note anything important. These sheets are confidential and are kept in a folder, eventually filed in the parent's folder in the locked cabinet.

Recently, thanks to feedback from our local evaluator Elizabeth Brach, it became clear that there was no opportunity for the parent to evaluate all five components of Even Start at once, thus reflecting the comprehensiveness of family literacy. Therefore, we came up with the following form, to be filled out by the parents every other Friday during Parent Discussion time. The form has been modified several times, and the final product owes much to the valuable feedback of Home-Based Director Ellen Grant Valade. We have tried it once, and hope it will help us keep an eye on the program as a whole. After the parent has filled it out, the form will be filed in the locked family file.

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"THIS WEEK 'I...' FORM"

NAME ____________________ Week ending Friday, ______ ___, 199_

SELF-ASSESSMENT: "This past two weeks, I and/or my child attended . . . "

ACTIViTY/COMPONENT	Yes	No	Comments
Adult class:			
ESL or ABE			
Computer class			
Phonics/Spelling			
Individual tutoring			
Parent discussion			
Contact w. child's school (Comment on any talks you, the parent, had with the teacher, volunteering in the classroom, etc.)			
Even Start preschool			
Headstart, CEOC, other preschool			
Family daycare/babysitter			
Elementary school			
Home Visit			
Parent-and-child time or field trip			
Reading to my children			

"THIS WEEK I..." FORM

The history of the form on the previous page is an example of the ongoing adaptation of our assessment practices. We used to have a separate home visit report form, and a separate school contact report form and a separate form to report books parents read to children during the week. Now the school contact and home visit forms are absorbed into the above one and thanks to a suggestion from Ellen Grant Valade, the home visitor will now help the parent keep a running record of books read, since it will be easier to do in the home where the books are right there in plain sight.

Each July, during home visits, Sylvia fills out a form with parents asking them to comment on their own progress, their children's progress, and their plans for September.

Child

Work samples are collected throughout the year for each child in the Even Start preschool class, and extensive running anecdotal records are kept. A developmental checklist is filled out for the child at midyear, then again at the end of the year. (Nancy is presently working on a specific literacy development checklist covering birth to 7 years linked to an instrument the Cambridge School Department is beginning to use which is based on Marie Clay's *Concepts About Print*, or CAP.) Preschool staff write short monthly goals.

In July, an End-of-the-Year Report is written for each child using the Cambridge School Department's Kindergarten Transition Form. A copy of this report is given to the parent. This coming year, we will begin keeping a parent-child spiral notebook for each child in the preschool class, in which staff can write down information about the child, and where parents can read and respond. These will be kept in an accessible box in the preschool room. Finally, the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test is readministered by Nancy during the July home visit.

EXIT ASSESSMENT

Since parents rarely leave Even Start with plenty of notice, this aspect of our assessment protocol is weakest. Ideally, we hope to give ABE parents a final TABE, all children a final PPVT, and all parents our Exit Interview, which includes questions about their future plans and their ratings of the different components of the program.

After all is said and done, what is the purpose of all this data collection? Within our program, it clearly helps parents document and celebrate their own and their children's progress. Even Start also needs to make sure, however, that their assessment practices are meaningful to potential funders, since our federal grant runs out the year 2001. We need to demonstrate that we are doing some good in terms that make sense to taxpayers and school departments and state legislators and whoever else might be interested in eventually adopting us.

For this reason, the eleven Even Start programs around Massachusetts – already accustomed to working together, thanks to a caring and energetic statewide coordinator at D.O.E. (Arlene Dale) who assembles us regularly — have begun to discuss the idea of looking at family literacy assessment from a statewide perspective.

In addition to the local and state layers of assessment, there is a national layer. Like the other 600 or so Even Start programs around the country, we have to report each

July to the Even Start Information System (ESIS) standard demographic and attendance data, among other things. For two years, we were also part of something called the National Sample study, and for a limited number of our families, reported TABE or CASAS scores for parents and Preschool Language Survey scores for their preschool children.

The resulting National Even Start Evaluation was disappointing because it did not capture at all the daily progress practitioners were seeing. Partly in response to this situation, a newly-formed national organization of practitioners called the National Even Start Association is moving toward doing its own evaluation, which will hopefully document this progress. Nancy is on their Advisory Board.

Our assessment practices seem to require constant tinkering, and we find ourselves trying this and rejecting that, seeing what works and doesn't work, and listening, reading, sharing, and certainly borrowing. Please feel free to adapt any of the instruments mentioned in this article, or contact us with any questions or ideas. (Sylvia Greene and Lally Stowell can be reached at the Community Learning Center, 19 Brookline St., Cambridge, MA 02139, tel. 617-349-6363; Nancy Hoe is at the Cambridge School Department, 159 Thorndike St., Cambridge, MA 02141, tel. 617-349-6493.) Cambridge Even Start looks forward to feedback to this article, and to the continuing dialogue.

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What We Had to Think About Before We Could Do Portfolio Assessment

by
Kathy Sikes

Durham Literacy
Council
Durham, NC

The Durham Literacy Council is a community agency with a participatory focus. Staff members and volunteer tutors work in a variety of settings from community centers, university worksite programs, residential substance abuse centers, jails and employment training programs. Volunteer training focuses on developing lessons from learners goals and authentic materials, and learners work either in small group settings, one to one tutoring sessions or both.

The Lila Wallace/Literacy South Portfolio Project inspired staff members to examine the role of assessment in a learner centered practice and to create the program structure necessary for implementation. The importance of participatory planning and ongoing reflection became a major focus as authentic assessment practices were explored. I am the program director and have worked for the Literacy Council for seven years.

INTRODUCTION

The portfolio project has helped us at the Literacy council think about a way to integrate assessment and instruction. If you're going to start into a portfolio, then you have to have some plan in the beginning about what you're after in your learning, beyond, "I want to learn to read and write better" or "I want to get a GED or get a drivers license." Tutors and students are having to do a lot more planning together initially. Even though we've always said we were participatory, and I think we've done the best job we could do with that, sometimes tutors kind of fumbled with focusing on students' goals. I think it was difficult for them to always see the progress they were making towards those goals, especially if someone didn't read and write very well and they wanted to get a GED or something. Doing the kind of planning that makes sense and there's something there to attach it to, it's almost like some kind of mutual contract, mutual decision making.

We're not where we would like to be in terms of full program participation. It was difficult for us to get started and I'm not sure why. I think we really struggled with how we train volunteers about portfolio, and we're still struggling with that somewhat. The piece that seemed to be missing when we did the portfolio training was the planning piece. Even our small group leaders were saying "We've done so many kinds of things, and there is nothing that really ties it together." I realize that they weren't planning very well and couldn't do portfolios if they weren't doing better planning. So we're just now getting to the point that we're going to start seeing people have real portfolios to talk about.

INTRODUCING PORTFOLIOS

Our teachers, other than the other two people on our staff, are all volunteers and so part of my charge was to go back and train and disseminate information from the portfolio assessment project. I think we did a good job with that. We held different workshops – on Saturday morning, one in the evening. Early on the workshops were an introduction to the whole portfolio process because we were really new at it too. We just wanted to get started and we handed out some things like cover sheets and portfolios, and said, "Well, go and try it and we'll meet in a couple of months and see what your questions are." That couple of months passed and not very many people did anything. Then we evaluated how we would do the training differently.

Next, we invited volunteers and learners who were trying out portfolio assessment to come and talk with other tutors about it. It wasn't perfect in the beginning. People just looked at the portfolios and talked about how they chose things or why a certain piece was in there. We decided we'd provide ample opportunity for people who had been in the program for a long time to come and get information about portfolio assessment. We wrote about it in newsletters, we did everything we could to incorporate existing tutors. Then we decided to put it in the training. Now, it's part of the tutor training that we do rather than an in-service workshop. Like pre-service training rather than in-service and staff development.

When we planned the first portfolio training workshop, we tried to do way too much. In some ways, I think we've made this an overcomplicated thing. When we first started having conversations in the portfolio assessment project about portfolios, there was a lot that I didn't understand. I did not understand the concept of "criteria." I'm not sure why not. Sometimes what I want to learn comes to me in the middle of things. It seemed like "criteria" was an esoteric thing. I didn't know the process well enough to feel like I could change it, or we could add other things. I know at one point I felt very limited about what I had chosen for my criteria. And then I got over it. I realized, this is mine! I can change this. It's fine, right? That part took a long time.

We struggled with how to talk to tutors about portfolio assessment, and basically what we said was, "this is a good thing. Look at all that can be done by using portfolios." We gave tutors some sample lessons reflecting on change. If I had to do it over again, I would just skip all these discussions about change and start talking about "how do you know you've learned something?" rather than it being some kind of introduction into "Now we're going to prepare you to participate in this process." I don't know, I think I was a little too careful, honestly, and not with learners with tutors. Then finally, I realized that part of it was that there was no organizational structure that supported portfolio assessment other than just a philosophical commitment.

Our tutors weren't having ongoing discussions about progress with their students, and they didn't have anything to base it on either. All they knew was some kind of large goal that this person had or didn't have. I hesitated to provide models because there I didn't want teachers and tutors to name the learning for the learner. I was concerned that we could interfere with the learners' right to choose and describe their learning any way that they wanted.

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DOING PORTFOLIOS

As far as the impact on students, that's hard to know yet. I think that the students will increase their desire to be more participatory because tutors and students are supposed to work together to plan their work for the quarter. People are sending us more complete plans. And tutors and students are filling them out together to plan their work for the quarter. I see two different people's handwriting on things. So I think that part will benefit the students.

Students will also benefit from looking at their work. In our first meeting, I say that it became really clear to people what they hadn't done. I mean, They were really proud of the work that they had done, but they kept seeing these gaps of things that were goals they had not met. We had two people who said "I don't have any writing to put in this," and "what happened to that writing class we used to come to?" And I said, "you stopped coming, and we closed the class. You know, we can't just run it forever with one person in it, or that needs to be a one-to-one match. Oh, well maybe we should do that again."

There were students that came to that meeting that only worked in workbooks. They had much less to put in their portfolios; for example, they saw people putting in their portfolios evidence that they had registered to vote or had been to conferences and had collected lots of material. We had talked about meeting with students individually to look at their portfolios. That evening, four students out of twelve asked me, "when are we going to do that?" So they felt invested in the project.

I'm looking forward to when we have or next meeting. We'll have people who are a little further along in looking at their portfolios than others. But my guess is that rather than everybody taking the same amount of time to get to that point, people will get there faster by seeing the examples of other people doing it.

I've loved doing my own portfolio. I've Loved it. Particularly the last time that we all got together in the portfolio project and I got to spend some time really looking at my folder. Until then, I just collected things really. The other times that we had to sort things ,I put a few things in my portfolio, but this time I really knew what I wanted in it. I also didn't edit when I was bringing things. I brought a box full of different kinds of reading, writings and work.

Writing the cover sheet has been really informative for me. The first thing that I think was important to mention is that it's not so much what I write on the cover sheet. It is the process of doing it. I mean, I've written handouts for years. I've written training workshops. I've never gone back and said, "why do I like this? Why am I keeping this now?" It's made me feel really good about the kinds of things that I've accomplished in my thinking and my job.

I tried to watch my progress and my learning and thinking about original criteria specifically. But, not everything I've included in my portfolio is about that. For example, I included part of what I wrote for a small-group inquiry based workshop, because I made an important connection. I realized how the planning part was missing for the tutors. They were saying "We love the idea of portfolios, because we weren't sure whether people were making progress, and it's a hard time getting learner input about what to do, and I thought, we're not very good at that, but we are getting somewhere now."

I tried to watch my progress and my learning and thinking about original criteria specifically. But, not everything I've included in my portfolio is about that. For example, I included part of what I wrote for a small-group inquiry based workshop, because I made an important connection.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Portfolio assessment has made us look at our training. Volunteers are, in essence, our staff and as such we expect some accountability for what's happening with their work. In some ways I which we had a 20 hour a week person who just paid attention to helping people plan, being a resource to them in their planning and then visiting them about their portfolios. We don't provide a lot of leadership on how to get input, how to ask good questions, and how to plan together. We just say "Do it. Good luck. And bring back a beautiful portfolio." So it was the connection between those two things, planning and ongoing assessment, that made me realize where the training needed to be done.

Right now in training, we do a three-hour session on assessment, mostly talking about what happens when people come in the door, what kind of initial assessment. Then we talk about what we do with that information, what we tell the tutor. We talk about the planning sheets and how the tutor can take the information given them and then have this more in depth conversation with the learner. Part of it's for your information lecture type stuff, but then usually at some point we say, "OK, now here's some information we would have given you on the phone about learners," and have them create lessons based on it, so they see the connection between the assessment piece and the lesson piece. People do quite a good job. I mean, I've been impressed. We don't do very much on what happens between the planning and evaluating how well it went, and that's the sort of thing that we have to work on in our training. Then we say . "OK, this was our goal, what might you put in a portfolio? What would be the range of things?" All we can do at this point is brainstorm that. We don't have anything to real to show people. We created sample portfolios that are very different from each other and show them to people in training. That seems to help. It wouldn't be anything like if learners were coming and talking about their portfolios, and I think we can pull that off by the next training. I do.

One of the other activities volunteers do in training is to help us create a training portfolio. They answer two questions and then talk about what they would give as evidence. We ask questions like, what did you learn about teaching and learning that you didn't know before? What did you like most about the training? We're getting much better feedback about what people are getting out of training.

CONCLUSION

My colleague Lee and I do all the training, so much of it is still in our heads. If we can create some kind of organizational memory of this project by keeping learners doing it— and by January we should have people who have pretty good starts on good portfolios—we will have started that process. If we can keep that going and have students help us lead portfolio workshops for other learners and volunteers then in a couple of years this will be our primary assessment tool.

It has been a real process for the organization, and if it took us two years to feel confident about it, I think we need to give ourselves that much time. Initially, we thought, "this will be a great thing to do because, one, this is the way we think anyway and learners will have that much more ownership over another piece of what they're involved with at the literacy council, and it'll be great to show the funders. We'll have all these really tangible things for people to see." Actually, the biggest impact has been an organizing effect

— making us take a real look at training and saying — "what are we saying about assessment? How can we get people to buy into the process? How can we get them to feel like it's not some kind of esoteric thing, or additional work, but make it as real as we've made writing and reading strategies?" That's were we are. It has allowed us to create an instructional organization that we didn't have before and to learn how to put things into a portfolio. That's an important step for us.

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Interviewed by Melody Schneider.
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Students Connecting with Students

Lessons in Health Care

by Judy Berry, Vandal Ivaneko, Nguyet Nyugen, Ana Reynoso, Elsa Reynoso, Magali Torres and Charlene Wigfall. Marcia Hohn is the team facilitator.

Operation Bootstrap
Lynn, MA

Who are we?

We are a group of eight women from different places with different languages and backgrounds: Dominican, Haitian, Mexican, Vietnamese, Russian, and American. We get together to work on health issues such as breast cancer, HIV and AIDS, and violence because we want our community to be safe and to be healthy. We are called The Student Action Health Team and got started in 1994, funded by the Comprehensive Health Project from the Massachusetts Department of Education to do health education at Operation Bootstrap, where we are or have been students.

Operation Bootstrap is located in Lynn, MA and offers classes in Adult Basic Education (ABE), English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), and General Educational Development (GED) as well as Family Literacy and pre-vocational programs. There are about 200 students in all of Bootstrap's programs and classes.

As The Student Action Health Team our job is to find out about the health education needs of students at Operation Bootstrap and develop plans to meet some of these needs. Every year we recruit new members for the team. Right now there are four original members and four new members.

After our first year together, we decided that we needed to do direct teaching in both English and native languages about health in the Bootstrap ABE, ESOL, GED, and Family Literacy classrooms because most community health education efforts did not meet the needs of Bootstrap students. We had brought in some community health educators during the first year but they talked too fast with difficult language and the materials they brought were too difficult to understand. Bootstrap students did not feel safe to ask questions or talk about whether the information was useful in their lives. The students told us they felt empty inside.

We decided we should let students choose the health topics they want to know more about. The team does this by putting on a health fair every fall for Bootstrap students and staff. We put up a list of health issues and then each student and staff member places one dot next to the issues they are most interested in learning about. In 1995-96, the top vote was for cancer education and we decided to focus on breast, cervical and testicular cancer because if they are detected early, successful treatment is more likely. In 1996-97, the top vote was for violence prevention. Bootstrap students were terrified because of the abduction of 6-year-old Jesus De La Cruz and this made them want to learn more about violence prevention in the community and in the home.

The educational programs are carried out in the classrooms as part of the regular classes. Our programs have three sessions of about 1.5 hours each and provide basic facts, hands-on practice, and information/ discussion about community resources. We use lots of drama to get at difficult and sensitive issues. Drama has been a good way to break the ice between the team and Bootstrap students and to get to students' hearts. We also use methods such as agree/disagree exercises, small group discussions, and pictures to get students and teachers participating, discussing, and interacting with the information.

For example, in the cancer education program, we held up written statements about basic facts and asked students to "vote" whether they thought the statement was true or false and then discussed the "answer" as it is known today. In beginning English classes we translated this information into as many as six languages. We wanted to make sure everyone really understood the information and had a chance to tell their stories and a safe atmosphere in which to ask questions.

In the next session small groups featured hands-on practice with breast and testicular models. A cancer educator helped us and we asked her to work with the men because we felt shy about teaching the men how to examine their testes.

In beginning English classes, we worked in small groups by language. The last session was a drama about going to the doctor and showed a situation where a patient with no insurance and limited English is not treated respectfully by the health care providers. This opened up the discussion about students' fears about discrimination and we talked about rights and responsibilities in medical situations.

We used drama a lot in the Family Violence program to illustrate the stories strangers use to get innocent children to come with them and to illustrate the short- and long-term effects of witnessing violence in the home on children. Our dramas — called Tommy at Eight Years and Tommy at 14 Years — were about a boy from a violent home and illustrated the long-term effects of witnessing violence. Students discussed the drama afterward and gave their ideas about what could help Tommy. We also performed a man-woman violence drama with a similar small group discussion. The idea is to get students talking about the health issue, to help each other and to find community resources that help. All this must take place in a safe atmosphere where students' privacy and cultural beliefs are respected.

Every year we assess our program to find out what the Bootstrap students thought about it and what changes in knowledge, attitudes and actions happened. As program coordinators, we also reflect about what *we* learned, how *we* changed and how *we* saw the program affect other people. We want to tell you how we do this.

ASSESSING THE PROGRAM IN EARLY DETECTION OF BREAST, CERVICAL AND TESTICULAR CANCER 1995-1996

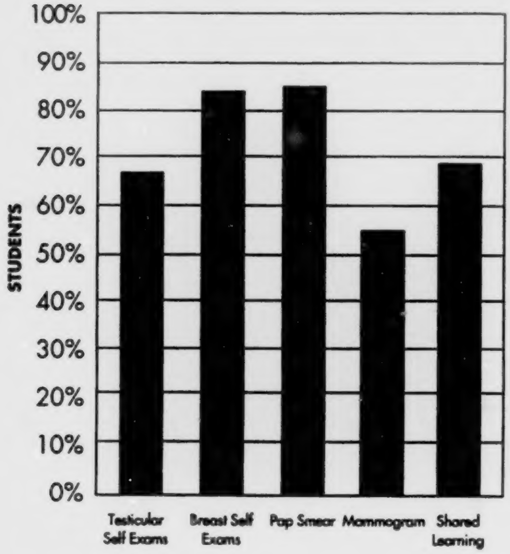
For our assessment, we decided to conduct a student survey to see the results of the work the team had done in early detection of breast, cervical and testicular cancer.

We developed the survey by brainstorming all we wanted to know, writing these thoughts down on Post-Its. For example, we wanted to know if students felt they understood the information, if they liked our teaching methods, if they saw this information as important to them and their families. We grouped the Post-Its to create categories. We then worked in pairs to develop statements that Bootstrap students could agree or disagree with on a scale of 1-5. There were three categories: 1) the importance of learning about breast, cervical and testicular cancer at Bootstrap,

2) the effectiveness of the teaching, and 3) resulting actions or steps the students had taken (such as having gone for a PAP test or a mammogram, or doing self-exams). Each category had six statements or questions.

We distributed the survey to the students in their classrooms, then we compiled the results and put it in bar graph form, which we thought the students could easily understand. The teachers helped us by explaining how to fill out the survey since many students were not familiar with the use of 1-5 scales. Although many students who had participated in the program had already left, 42 students filled out the survey. Here is an example of one of the bar graphs.

ACTIONS TAKEN BY LITERACY STUDENTS AT OPERATION BOOTSTRAP TWO MONTHS AFTER THE BREAST, CERVICAL, AND TESTICULAR CANCER EDUCATION PROGRAM BY THE STUDENT ACTION HEALTH TEAM



The survey showed that the students felt they had learned health information important for their lives and the lives of their families and friends, they liked having other students as their teachers and appreciated the many different teaching techniques, especially the drama. The survey further showed that students were taking action as a result of the education program.

We also conducted an internal team evaluation about how we felt about the work we did. We drew pictures and made statements about our personal feelings and shared these things in the team. Eighteen positive statements were reported, such as school being the best place to learn about health and that the information went beyond the classroom to family and friends. We were proud of each other and saw that we were role models for each other as well as for the Bootstrap students. We appreciated the support of Marie Wallace (who is a cancer educator). She informed us about cancer.

We also appreciated the support of the teachers working alongside the team by preparing students with vocabulary and following up with additional activities. Overall, we saw that receiving information in a native language and/or in simple ways with simple terms made for better understanding. It was our opinion that because students had better understanding they were able to take action such as doing self-exams or going for free PAP tests and mammograms.

ASSESSING THE PROGRAM ON FAMILY VIOLENCE 1996-97

We decided to do one-to-one interviews to find out about the effects of the family violence program because this is a personal and very sensitive issue. Many Bootstrap students have this problem in their lives. Two Operation Bootstrap women students have been killed by their partners over the past few years. Many others live in fear and in threatening situations. Also, Bootstrap students were very emotionally affected by the abduction of Jesus De La Cruz in September of 1996. (He remains missing today.)

We went to the students one by one after the second session of our program – the effects on children of witnessing violence in the home – and did 36 interviews. Team members went to the classrooms and explained that we were evaluating our program and needed students' opinions. Many students volunteered to be interviewed. They told us they learned that children are emotionally affected for life, continue the pattern of violence, and are more likely to use drugs, be runaways, or have an early pregnancy – and that they did not know these facts before. For young students this was very important information for their future lives. After the man-woman violence drama we conducted some additional interviews and we were very careful to let students know we were not singling anyone out, that we needed to get their thoughts so we could improve our teaching.

Students told us they liked the use of drama, that it is a good way to present information. Family violence is a hard topic to talk about and drama keeps it safe so people do not feel singled out. The students liked the opportunity to give opinions in small group discussions after the dramas about how to help stop the cycle of violence.

We also learned that students were taking action. They were sharing the information with family, neighbors, friends and co-workers, learning how to use neighbors and the phone to call the police for protection, and using community agencies for assistance when necessary. Students were also using religion, support groups, and community counselors. Many students told us that they did not know about these resources before, especially resources for helping with children. Students within the program were also trying to help each other.

In our assessments of both the cancer and violence education programs, students told us that Operation Bootstrap is a good place to learn about health issues and that health education added to their language and literacy learning. Teachers told us that students got so interested in talking about health issues in the class that they would forget to worry about their English — they would just talk in English even if it was not perfect because they were so anxious to communicate about the topic.

Several students told us that the Student Action Health Team should teach in other places because we "know how to teach and teach important things." This made us feel very proud. During 1997-98 we will be mentors to programs new to doing health education in their program. We have a lot of experience and lessons to share and we look forward to helping them with the important topic of health.

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National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL)

Assessment Research Agenda

by
Beth Bingman

Center for Literacy
Studies
Knoxville, Tennessee

What impact does participation in adult learning and literacy programs have on an adult's life and how can this impact effectively be assessed?

The NCSALL partners at the Center for Literacy Studies (CLS) at the University of Tennessee and the College of Education at Rutgers University began working with this question. In the first year of NCSALL (the federally-funded National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy) we have been getting our research projects up and running, and beginning to get a handle on this question. It is more complex than we ever imagined!

We are currently working on four projects that we hope will help us move toward an answer. The first is a policy study that examines existing impact studies and state performance accountability projects and systems and draws implications for literacy policy and practice and for the design and methodology of future impact studies. The two papers in this study are being written by Hal Beder and Juliet Merrifield and should be available around the first of the year. The papers make clear that answering questions like, "What difference does our work make?" and "Is it working?" depends on who is asking and for what reasons as well as who is answering based on what data and what assumptions.

The second study is looking at how adult learners identify the impacts of participation in adult education in their lives. We are currently interviewing ten Tennessee adults who have been students in adult basic education. We are asking them to tell us about their lives —about their work, families, and community activities as well as their educational experiences. We plan to follow these initial interviews with interviews with another fifty adult learners from a variety of programs across the country. From these life stories we hope to be able to "hear" the differences, the impacts that adult education have had in their lives.

A third lens for looking at the larger question is that of local programs. We will be working in an action research project with a Tennessee program that is implementing the new Equipped for the Future framework as it develops new ways of monitoring the program. We have reviewed how other fields (public health, community development) measure outcomes, particularly improvement in quality of life of individuals and communities. We will be working with this literacy program to discover what can be applied to measuring changes in the lives of learners.

The NCSALL partners at Rutgers are beginning to identify the variety of teacher/learner transactions or interactions that occur in adult education classrooms. With this understanding we will be better able to know what it is that adult learners have participated in.

When we're done, what will we have? We know for sure that we will not have the answer to our big question. But we will have more answers. And more questions. We will have looked closely at what has and hasn't worked in previous attempts to answer these questions. We will have heard the voices of learners talking about impacts on their lives. We will have a model of looking at outcomes of adult education in the quality of learners' lives, a model that can be used by local programs. We will have a better understanding of what is happening in adult education classrooms in order to better approach measuring the outcomes.

While I know from experience the many challenges of recruitment, teaching, and staff development, I never had any difficulty thinking about these areas of practice.

But thinking about assessment is a different matter. We began by trying to get clear on the language: inputs, outputs, outcomes, impact, indicators of program quality, performance accountability measures. We tried to find out what these mean and ended up deciding that the best we could do was to decide what we mean by them.

The questions of what to assess and for what reasons need as much thinking as how to assess. Do we want to know what happened, or do we want to know did x, y, or z happen? We all want to know the impact of our work — as teachers, as learners, as program administrators, as funders. But each of us have different ways of asking the question. "Did they learn what I taught?" "What did I learn?" "How many passed the G.E.D.?" "How many got a job?" "What difference did any of this make in my life?" "What difference does any of this make in my community?" Underlying all these questions is the question of who gets to decide.

So one year into our work on impacts assessment, we are back to doing the work on our projects. We hope the research will contribute to a much bigger discussion about assessment that will help us clarify what we can say about our impact as a field.

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Voices from the Field: The Basic English Skills Test

In this section we look at various voices from the field around the much-used BEST. Although Adventures *is a journal about learner-centered approaches to assessment and evaluation, it is time to look more deeply at other "assessment tools" that we all use. This section is not intended to encourage or discourage the use of the BEST, but to ask practitioners in the field how they view the test from the historical, teacher, and volunteer perspectives. We should all reflect on the tools we use to see if they fit with our programs and our learners.*

The History of the BEST

by
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The history of the BEST is an interesting one. It began in the early 1980s when the Federal Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) saw a need to more effectively move refugees from welfare to economic self sufficiency through the "provision of a coordinated and structured English Language Training Program." In order to make this happen, they invested in a national initiative called the Mainstream English Language Training (MELT) Project which brought together ESL professionals from throughout the US. The goal of this initiative was to develop and design not only a test, but curriculum guidelines and Student Performance Level (SPL) definitions.

The International Institute of Boston was one of the contributors to the MELT Project. As part of the Project, the BEST (Basic English Skills Test) was developed and field tested in a number of locations, including Boston. This test was designed to assess "elementary" listening, speaking, reading and writing skills reflecting a competency based approach to language teaching and assessment. The test could be reliably used if an individual had low literacy skills. The oral test could be used by itself if an individual did not have the literacy skills needed for the written component.

The BEST is life skills- and task-based, evaluating a student's ability to use English in real life situations. It was thought to be a tool that could provide useful information in determining an initial class placement or determining progress in some specific functional areas such as telling time or counting money. It was never intended to test general language proficiency or to be especially useful in programs that did not use a survival life skills-based curriculum.

Much of the ESL being offered in the early 1980s was *not* life skills-based and did little to introduce learners to the world of work. Often the emphasis was grammar rather than functional language skills. Even more important to teachers, there were no resources for working with adults who were non-literate or had low native language literacy skills.

Likewise ESL assessment tools tended to be more academic with an emphasis on testing grammar. Very few tests could effectively assess learners with low literacy and/or little or no knowledge of English. As a result, many of the materials being used in the field were either inappropriate or were being generated by teachers with few guidelines or standards.

ORR, together with ESL professionals from many parts of the United States, decided there was a need to develop some common tools and common language for the Refugee ESL programs which were overwhelmed by the large numbers of adults arriving each month needing both English and the skills to get jobs.

Another interesting fact about the MELT Project is its relationship to the oversees refugee camp programs. In the late 1970s and early 1980s following the Cambodian

At a program level, however, assessment has to carefully consider both learner and program goals. So while the BEST is often thought to be one of the better tests, especially for learners at the beginning levels, it is not adequate for all programs and learners.

genocide and the aftermath of the Vietnam war, large number of refugees were filling camps in countries throughout Southeast Asia. Many of them were applying to emigrate to the United States. The Department of State funded processing centers in a number of sites in both Southeast Asia and Africa where ESL and orientation prior to arrival to the U.S. was required for all adults accepted into the U.S. refugee program.

Close to 35,000 people graduated from these programs each year. In places like Galang, Indonesia, Bataan, Philippines and Phanat Nikon, Thailand, programs were set up and intensive efforts were made to develop common curriculum, common assessment processes and uniform class level definitions. As a result, the curriculum development, staff training and resources produced in these overseas programs was impressive.

Even more impressive was that the work done in these refugee camps was coordinated with the MELT material developed stateside. For example, when a refugee arrived in the U.S., his or her class level was stamped on the I-94 card giving stateside ESL programs an indication of a learner's SPL upon completion of the overseas program. Since the BEST was correlated with the SPL, it was possible to verify an SPL using the BEST and more easily place a student into a class. Overseas ESL and Cultural Orientation curriculum was shared with teachers in the U.S so teachers often knew what material students had covered in the camps; the MELT curriculum was designed to build on what was covered in the camps.

Now, almost 12 years later, the BEST and other MELT material have gone well beyond ESL programs targeting incoming refugees. As accountability and outcomes measurement become increasingly important, many funders have adopted the SPL and the BEST as required tools for ESL programs. Obviously the framework and "common language" that these tools provide give funders a better ability to quantify progress.

At a program level, however, assessment has to carefully consider both learner and program goals. So while the BEST is often thought to be one of the better tests, especially for learners at the beginning levels, it is not adequate for all programs and learners. The test was developed as an alternative to traditional paper and pencil tests, with an emphasis on assessing very basic life skills. If a program is not working with a basic survival life skills focus, this test may not be particularly useful when determining initial class placement or when measuring progress. If the emphasis is prevocational, for example, more specific prevocational skills may need to be measured rather than survival skills. In addition, for learners who have lived in the U.S for a long time, this test may not be appropriate. Tasks like telling time, counting money, writing checks or circling dates on a calendar may simply not be challenging enough.

Programs often use the BEST in conjunction with other tools. This enables teachers to individualize testing by drawing on a variety of tools, not just one test. Testing needs to match both the learner and where he/she is coming from culturally, linguistically, and academically and what the program needs to know to adequately address the learning needs of the student. The BEST by itself may or may not satisfy all of this.

Taken from Competency-Based Mainstream English Language Training Project (MELT), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Social Security Administration, Office of Refugee Resettlement (March 1985), p. 1, section 1.

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Why I Think the BEST Isn't Good Enough

by
Dulany
Alexander

Operation Bootstrap
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According to its documentation, the BEST was designed for determining classroom placement, for assessing individual or class progress, and diagnosing "language-use tasks" (like telling time) that need teaching and remediation.

As a placement tool, the BEST attempts to cover a lot of ground, including not only grammar and vocabulary but also cultural familiarity and the American idiom. Were all prospective students nearly alike in background, the BEST might be more useful. But consider two possibilities: a Russian immigrant with post-secondary education(including formal English studies) who arrived in the US two days ago; and an immigrant from the Dominican Republic who completed only primary school and has lived in the US for twelve years, all the while working on an assembly line with little opportunity for contact with native speakers.

The Russian is likely to miss all the money questions, never having seen American currency before the test; most of the other questions will be incomprehensible because the examiner's American accent is so unlike the British accent the Russian encountered in previous studies. Yet, this person may have considerable vocabulary and exposure to written English, not to mention the benefit of having already studied English.

Meanwhile, the factory worker has been shopping, watching television, and seeing her children through school. She has learned to speak enough pidgin English to get through day-to-day language encounters, as well as several questions on this test.

Consider the possible core evaluation scores for these two students. The newly-arrived Russian is so mystified by the American accent that she can understand few of the questions, although she eagerly names objects in each picture of the test. She scores eight points, although with a couple of trips to the grocery store she might have gotten another four or five points for the shopping portion of the test. Her core evaluation results: SPL 0 (Beginning Literacy ESOL).

The second student's performance reflects cultural familiarity and a lot of (fossilized and incorrect) language. She gets five points for the shopping portion of the test, she does well on the fluency questions (where volume of production is measured without penalty for grammatical inaccuracy), earning 13 more points. These 18 points place her at SPL 2 (Beginning ESOL). Both students are in some sense beginners, but their language needs are very different. The difference is far more complex than 10 points worth.

As a student gains more language, the scoring of the BEST test becomes more punishing. The listening vocabulary needed to earn the nine "listening comprehension" points is not difficult, although an inability to follow a map may cost even an advanced student two of these points. Eight questions are scored for fluency. The three points for a " fluency question" are accessible to a student who has only a minimal degree of grammatical control but who is expressive and uninhibited by a concern for perfection; a reticent personality can easily diminish the score of a more capable student. But the 24 questions on Form B that are scored for grammatical and idiomatic accuracy are truly problematic for the ESOL student.

Consider the question "What is she doing?" accompanied by a picture of a woman watching TV. "She watch TV," "Her watching TV," and "She watching TV" all get scored as a one-point answer (correct information in a response that would not be used by a native speaker), while "Watching TV" is a two-point answer. For these "communication questions" there is a one-point risk in attempting anything more sophisticated than the phrasal response "watching TV." A two-point answer requires subject-verb agreement, verb tense, articles, prepositions and word choice being grammatically and idiomatically correct, too. For a student who is in a class that encourages communication over grammatical precision, the BEST changes the rules by awarding more points when the student gives an answer terse enough that the inevitable slip of article or preposition never occurs. The BEST fails to capture how well the student has mastered any of the pitfalls that lie between "watch TV" and "she's watching TV."

The BEST's third goal — as a diagnostic tool — is only somewhat better met. The BEST can point out which of the several areas of "survival" vocabulary (and culture) are needed by a student. However, given its all-or-nothing approach to grammatical accuracy, it is of no use in determining the structural issues of English that need to be addressed.

The MELT curricula framework, of which the BEST was the final piece, defined the task of the ESOL class as being tied to "language use tasks" in the American culture, necessary for functioning in the US. It is a useful tool for the ESOL teacher. The long form of the BEST is a cumbersome attempt to quantify language skills that fails to account for the diversity of our students' backgrounds and for the immensity of the language learning task. An ESOL program would do well to consider other tools for placement, progress, and diagnosis of the language learners' needs.

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The BEST is Workable, But It's Not the Only Choice

by
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I began using the BEST in the early 1980s when I was an ESL coordinator for the Refugee Employment and Education Program (REEP) in Massachusetts. I used it to help assess the oral English language skills of the newly-arriving adult refugees.

At that time, there was only one version each of the core section and the literacy skills section. The program was a competency-based program which taught survival skills and pre-vocational skills, and the BEST tested these areas. It provided a baseline score which could be compared to all learners for placement purposes. When used as an on-going assessment tool, it tested mastery of the materials, showing the need for more practice, movement to a higher level or, ultimately, ability to handle employment.

When used in this manner, the BEST was quite effective, but its biggest drawback was that it took too long to administer. The core section had to be administered to each student individually, which often took half an hour. Only several years later did a short version appear which could be given in ten to fifteen minutes. The literacy skills section was still rarely used because it took at least an hour and the program emphasized aural/oral skills .

In the late 1980s, refugee programs were funded through local Service Delivery Areas (SDAs) which had a central assessment unit that administered the BEST to all program participants. Individuals who never used the BEST or had no experience testing limited English-proficient clients were now responsible for program referral and placement. I was asked by the local SDA to train their assessment staff in the use of the BEST. However, since this subjective test was open to the opinion of the tester, the scores often made no sense. Students who could repeat their personal information, tell time, and identify money would score higher than they really were in overall English Language Skills. Conversely, students soon learned that high scores could prevent them from attending ESL classes, so they often would not answer questions in order to score low. As a result, I had to develop an in-house assessment tool which would be more reliable for placement purposes.

Most recently I was still associated with a refugee education program, and assessment has gone back to the programs. The BEST, in its long form, is still the chosen tool of assessment. It is used for placement purposes, but it is also used as the only ongoing assessment tool to identify student achievement. The same version of the test was administered every ten weeks (until recently the test was given every five weeks).

Since the success of the program is linked to the increase in the number of Student Performance Levels (SPLs) , the curriculum is centered around the basic skills tested in the test. When a student reaches an SPL level 6, he is no longer eligible for English classes. This has led to many questions about the validity of the test in my mind. While participating in the program, a student could take the same test six or more times. Also, many people overlook the fact that this is an oral interview for assessing basic life skills. If you have been in this country for a year or more, you most likely will be able to answer questions about survival topics but do you really have enough language skills to successfully obtain employment or advance in your position?

I do understand and support an "early to work" philosophy for limited English speakers, but I feel that students should be allowed to continue their education to achieve advancement. The BEST is a good assessment tool for placement, but it should not be the only tool used to show individual achievement or program effectiveness. In the late 1980s when the Federal government passed legislation calling for standardized tests to evaluate ABE and ESL programs, there was much debate about the purpose of assessment and interest in the field for alternative assessment tools. The conclusions made were that assessment should focus on the needs of the students and measure how we are helping students meet their goals. It is an ongoing partnership between the program and the student.

Assessment can take many forms, including for example, student portfolios, teacher observation, student feedback, and student participation in discussions, simulations, and demonstrations.

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An AmeriCorps Volunteer's First Impressions of the BEST

by
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I have been an AmeriCorps*VISTA volunteer at the International Language Institute of Massachusetts in Northampton, MA for three months. One of the most exciting parts of my assignment is learning more about the field of ESL education.

I was recently trained by another VISTA volunteer at my site to administer BESTs to incoming and current students. The training procedure seemed quite lax to me: my training involved reading the BEST booklet to become familiar with the questions, observing several testings, scoring the observed tests, and then comparing my scores with those of the tester. I noticed that my trainer skipped or reworded some questions that were in the test booklet. Upon asking about this, my trainer explained to me that those questions were "worded too hard" and that the woman who trained her "didn't like" certain questions and so skipped them or worded them differently.

After several observations, I was deemed ready to begin testing students myself.

Two groups of people in our school take the BEST. Incoming ESL students take the BEST to determine in which class level they belong. Students already in our program take the test to determine their progress and, if progress has been made, to reassign classes.

It seems more natural to administer the BEST to incoming students. Students who have never met me or other members of the staff don't think it strange if I ask them their name, where they are from, or what their native language is. But it sometimes strikes current students as strange to be asked questions we already know the answer to and have on record. At best, the student realizes this is part of the test, and plays along. At worst, the student does not take the tester or the test seriously.

Students at the ILI long enough to be retested are usually comfortable enough to want to talk expansively to their tester. While we certainly encourage our students to share their thoughts and feelings with us, while taking the BEST students may sometimes, through conversation, give an answer before the question is asked. This prevents the tester from determining whether the student does or would understand the question.

The BEST does offer a truer assessment of communication skills than a multiple choice test. Because questions are open ended, students may answer questions in a way that better demonstrates their skills. However, students may speak with fluency and skill about topics not covered by test questions and there is no way for students to be "credited" for these skills in the BEST.

The BEST seems to work better as an assessment tool for those at rudimentary levels of English. Because it doesn't address more sophisticated English speaking skills, the BEST offers no place to go for a student who has mastered basic communication skills. The BEST score also, while it has a few literacy questions, does not comprehensively test reading and writing levels, so those who have adequate speaking skills but lower literacy levels may fall through the cracks.

The scoring of the BEST depends greatly on the tester. While being trained, there were several instances in which my trainer and I gave different scores on the same question. Because the score depends on the tester's perception of "good" or "bad," the test score cannot be compared consistently with BESTs administered by other testers. For true consistency, the BEST needs to be administered in the same way each time by the same person. If the test is being used internally at one agency, skipping one question will not affect class levels if all of the tests have the same question omitted. However, because we work with other agencies and often refer students back and forth, test scores may not be consistent with those given at other agencies.

I feel that the BEST is appropriate for what it was designed for: as an intake tool for those with a low level of English. For levels of English higher than basic survival skills, however, a new assessment tool needs to be found.

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What Counts?
Assessing Computer Skills

by
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I am currently working as an instructor at Malden Mills in Lawrence, Massachusetts in a project funded by the Corporation of Business, Work, and Learning. One of my first tasks was to design an "Introduction to Computers" class along with assessment tools that could help us place students at the appropriate level and measure both an individual's progress and the effectiveness of the class.

I wanted to develop a rubric that consisted of an even number of competency levels, since people have a tendency to go for the middle when there is an odd number. I came up with descriptions of six levels of computer use (Figure 1) ranging from never having used a computer (level 1) to basically being a computer guru (level 6). Our Introduction to Computers course was designed to serve people from levels 1,2, and 3. Each class worked best and the participants made the most efficient use of their time if the abilities of the participants differed by no more than one level. A class that was mostly level 1 could concentrate on learning how to handle a mouse and how to enter and leave programs while a class that was mostly level 3 could go into programs in more depth.

Since I was giving an assessment to as many as twenty people at once, and I am not a particularly good detective, I decided to utilize self-assessments. With each group, I walked them through the six levels of the rubric in detail, expanding on exactly what I meant by each level and emphasizing the importance of answering honestly. If a person was really level 3 and self-described herself as level 1, she might be bored in a class that spent an hour learning to handle a mouse and another hour learning to open and close programs.

We decided a few weeks later that more than 90% of the students demonstrated computer knowledge and performance in class that matched their self-assessments. Since I also wanted some objective information, I developed a short questionnaire to go along with the rubric (Figure 2) to get a sense of both computer and written language skills. If questions were answered inappropriately or not at all, I would refer the participant to our ESOL assessment process. If questions were answered with considerable sophistication, I might refer the participant to a community college program more appropriate for an advanced student than our introductory course.

I needed to develop a checklist of skills that our course would address. My first effort (Figure 3) drew upon many years of introducing computers to adults plus a month of examining the needs of workers and managers at Malden Mills by going on repeated tours of the plant and having numerous informal conversations with both workers and managers. In addition, I received the considerable assistance of my colleagues, Cindy Cook, Judy Hikes, and Johan Uvin. While both Cindy and Judy had extensive experience with adult students and had worked with computers in a classroom setting before, this was the first time they were teaching a formal computer course. They provided a continual reality check for me and helped me from becoming too technical, while I provided the overall course outline and first draft of the assessment form, as well as technical assistance. The three of us taught a total of nine sections of the Introductory course. Two more instructors have been added in our second cycle.

While the rubric gave us a general idea of the computer expertise of our participants, the checklist gave us a far more detailed look at what students knew. In the first cycle, I gave the checklist to my students on the first day of class and had them check off the items they knew under the Pre column. But following Johan's suggestion, we changed to a rating system in which 1 meant they couldn't do the task, 2 meant they could complete the task with some prompting, and 3 meant they could do the task independently in a classroom situation. I used the new system for the first time when I worked with students to complete the "Post" column of the checklist. Since I now knew the students' computer competencies, I was able to participate in the "Post" test with them.

Our experience with the first cycle, along with getting some new capabilities on the computers, led to an expanded form (Figure 4). We added items that we were able to work on in the first cycle, or that we decided we wanted to add to the curriculum for the second cycle.

As an additional reality check whether our efforts were relevant to the needs of the workers and the workplace, my final task was to relate our Computer Assessment Scoring Guide with the National Skill Standards Project for Advanced High Performance Manufacturing (Figure 5). The National Skill Standards Project is a work-in-progress that is trying to articulate those skills needed by workers across many industries. Such standards can be used as a tool to analyze the skills needed to perform a certain job. They can also provide valuable insight for educators working with future workers.

I felt that our Computer Assessment addressed problem solving skills (PS), as well as computer skills (CU). In general, I think that determining how to use a computer to solve a new problem or complete a new task requires greater understanding than just learning how to use a particular program and being instructed when to use it. For example, it takes a greater understanding to use a computer to troubleshoot a malfunctioning machine than it does to repeatedly go through a standard procedure with a correctly functioning machine. Finally, rather than being an end in itself, at the highest level the computer becomes just one more tool in a broader process of problem solving.

☑

FIGURE 1

Project STEPS **Name**________________________

Date______________________

COMPUTER ASSESSMENT SCORING GUIDE

1. Has never used a computer. Is very worried and uncomfortable about having to use a computer.

2. Has used a computer at least a few times. Can turn a computer on, but understands little else. Needs considerable direction and support to handle even the most fundamental tasks. Cannot handle a mouse without difficulty.

3. Used a computer competently in a structured work situation, but it still uncomfortable with unfamiliar applications. Can follow clear step-by-step directions, but cannot use the computer as a tool. Can use a mouse to move around the screen. Does not fully understand how programs and data differ and how they are organized, stored, and accessed.

4. Has some experience using the computer as a tool. Can use word processing and other programs. Can learn additional programs with training. Is able to experiment and try different things out on the computer. Understands the basic structure of the computer and the difference between programs and data.

5. Experienced and confident using the computer as a tool. Able to do troubleshooting to solve problems. Comfortable using help systems and manuals to learn how to use software. Able to determine the appropriate software to use to accomplish a task.

6. Frequently helps others with their computer problems. Can clearly explain to others computer capabilities and functions. Can evaluate software and hardware. Tests new software and creatively uses it to improve productivity and quality.

Self-assessment score __________

Assessment score ___________

FIGURE 2

Project STEPS **Name**______________ **Date**______________

INTRODUCTION TO COMPUTERS ASSESSMENT

1. How do you properly turn off a computer?

2. Do you know how to type?

3. What is the difference between an operating system, such as Windows 95, and an application program, such as Microsoft Word?

4. Using a mouse, how can you select something on the screen?

5. What are you using a computer for right now?

6. If you are not currently using a computer on your job, what do you think you might have to use a computer for in the next year?

Assessment Score ______

FIGURE 3

Introduction to Computers

Individual Record for: **Class:**

Skill	**Pre**	**Post**
Turn on computer		
Correctly turn off computer		
Use a mouse		
Use a keyboard		
Describe what makes a computer a computer		
Adjust monitor		
Start a program by double-clicking an icon		
Start a program from the Program list or Windows Explorer		
Open a document		
Save a document		
Close a document		
Close a program		
Understand the difference between a program and a document		
Understand the file structure of Windows 95		
Navigate the file structure of Windows 95 using Windows Explorer		
Create a Microsoft Word document		
Print a document		
Change print options		
Change screen options		
Create a Microsoft Excel document		
Troubleshoot by checking electrical connections		
Install software		
Open the system unit		

FIGURE 4

Introduction to Computers

Individual Record for: **Class:**

Skill	**Pre**	**Post**
Turn on computer		
Correctly turn off computer		
Use a mouse		
Use a keyboard		
Describe what makes a computer a computer		
Adjust monitor		
Start a program by double-clicking an icon		
Start a program from the Program list or Windows Explorer		
Open a document		
Save a document		
Close a document		
Close a program		
Understand the difference between a program and a document		
Understand the file structure of Windows 95		
Navigate the file structure of Windows 95 using Windows Explorer		
Create a Microsoft Word document		
Print a document		
Change print options		
Change screen options		
Create a Microsoft Excel document		
Troubleshoot by checking electrical connections		
Install software		
Open the system unit		
Create a Microsoft Access database		
Enter data in a Microsoft Access database		
Select the correct software for a task		
Use tutorial software		
Use educational software		
Find and respond to screen prompts		
Confident in ability to learn computer skills and procedures		
Modify screen properties		
Use digital camera		
Touch up and print digital pictures		
Understand how a computer can control production equipment		
Read a process control computer screen (i.e. Wonderware)		
Use a computer to monitor and control production equipment		

FIGURE 4

Relationship of Project STEPS Computer Assessment Scoring Guide with the National Skill Standards Project for Advanced High Performance Manufacturing

A worker who scores at level 1, 2, or 3 would not meet any of the National Skill Standards.

Depending on the programs learned, a worker at Malden Mills functioning at level 4 would meet one or more of the following standards:

CU 3 List various methods of tracking inventory.
CU 5 Demonstrate use of an industry-accepted word processing software package.
CU 6 Demonstrate use of an industry-accepted spreadsheet software package.
CU 7 Demonstrate use of an industry-accepted database software package.

A worker at Malden Mills functioning at level 5 would meet all the level 4 standards plus:

CU 1 List possible computer applications in manufacturing processes.
CU 2 Identify possible effects of introducing computers into manufacturing processes.
PS 2 Apply a system of problem solving.
PS 3 Identify opportunities for applying problem solving techniques.

A worker at Malden Mills functioning at level 6 would meet all the level 5 standards plus:

PS 1 Explain the value of applying a problem solving system.

Learning from Experience

The TABE: Thoughts from an Inquiring Mind

by
Cathy Coleman

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Boston, MA

A typical day in my life starts like this: I sit in a stack on the book shelf. Suddenly, I am whisked away and handed to someone who looks as startled by me as I am by them. I am a TABE (The Test of Adult Basic Education) and I have become according to one adult education professional, the " industry standard." Lots of people know my name. Some love me and some hate me. I guess you can't please all the people all of the time.

The TABE is a battery of multiple-choice tests. According to the publisher, the purpose of the battery is "not to test specific life skills, but to test basic skills in the context of life skills tasks" (CTB/McGraw Hill, 1987). There is a vocabulary section and a reading comprehension section, which together give a composite reading score. A locator test is available which consists of 25 multiple choice items and 25 multiple choice computation items ranging from whole numbers skills to decimals. The locator requires 37 minutes to administer (for both vocabulary and arithmetic sections). There are also two math sections and two writing sections.

Programs vary a great deal on which sections (or how many sections) of the TABE are given. The reading section is almost always one of the sections included.

You can't please all the people all the time. The same could be said for any type of assessment. The question for me as an adult educator and staff development person is, does this test meet my needs, the needs of my program, and the needs of my learners?

To begin to address these questions, I look at my own experience as an adult educator. I have been able to gain a fairly accurate, general idea of a learner's reading comprehension level by using the TABE. Someone might come to my class on any given day with a TABE score of 5.5, for example. This gives me an idea of where to start. It does not, however, give me an idea of which materials I might try with this learner.

Still, I have learned over the years to take that score with a rather large grain of salt. When I talk to my learners about their scores on the TABE (which they are almost always anxious to find out), I tell them that this score only gives us a ballpark figure and that we will both know better after a few weeks of working together, at which "level," for want of a better word, they are.

We also talk about the value of knowing a " level." We discuss how it can give us a general idea about how far they might be from being able to take the GED (which is very often their first, and sometimes only, stated goal).

My career in adult education had almost always involved the wearing of at least two different hats. One is that of the Practitioner Inquiry Coordinator (PIC). In my role as PIC, I work with teachers to see the worlds of our classrooms through the eyes of an anthropologist. We observe carefully. We try to answer the question: What is going on in this classroom? We try to identify and question the underlying assumptions in our teaching. Sometimes we make changes based on that.

A counselor I spoke with told me that the TABE is the "industry standard." I asked how long the program had been using the TABE. He told me that they had been using the TABE "since 1973 when I got here."

As a teacher who had taught in a number of different programs and settings, and as a staff developer who has contact with many different teachers, I then considered the question: How is the TABE used? What is it used for?

Many programs seem to use the TABE as an initial assessment tool to determine placement in one of three (typically ABE, Pre-GED, and GED) programs. Some programs administer the TABE on a regular basis to determine movement to higher levels.

Some funders do this too. Some mandate intervals at which the TABE must be taken. In one such case, I had several students who needed to take the TABE after every 150 hours of class time (about every two to three months). Some of these students had taken the same form of the test a few times even before they got to my class.

Some students have told me that their goal for class was to reach an eighth grade level on the TABE so that they could enter a particular job training program. In some cases, a great deal was riding on this particular test score. For these students, passing the test (meaning scoring at the eighth grade level) became their priority (understandably so). So…I learned rather quickly in my career that the TABE could sometimes make or break a student's potential career path.

A study published in 1995 by the National Center for Adult Literacy (NCAL) entitled *"When less is more: A comparative Analysis for Placing Students in Adult Literacy Classes"* concluded that "a test as brief as the TABE locator could predict placements as well as the complete group of reading tests" The following sums up their recommendations:

"Attempts to achieve extremely high accuracy in placement should be tempered by a consideration of the small number of placement levels usually available.… Overall it may be concluded that less testing may be more valuable to both students and adult literacy programs. Less time on testing means less cost for testing. Perhaps more importantly, learners often have distaste for and fear of standardized tests. By cutting back on testing and moving toward a self assessment model, programs may stimulate greater motivation and satisfaction among the clients they serve."

Based on my experience, I would recommend we consider the following questions:

- When and why did we all decide that the TABE was the " industry standard"?
- Does the TABE help us find out the information we are seeking to know?
- What do we seek to know from using the TABE?
- To what extent is the TABE successful in placing students in the correct classes?
- Is there flexibility in our programs when the TABE results are not successful in placing students in the correct classes?
- Are we using the TABE in a way that is consistent with the intended purposes of the test?
- Does the TABE help learners identify needs and/or levels?

It is possible that the TABE is indeed the very best test to use to determine this kind

Some students have told me that their goal for class was to reach an eighth grade level on the TABE so that they could enter a particular job training program. For these students, passing the test (meaning scoring at the eighth grade level) became their priority. I learned rather quickly in my career that the TABE could sometimes make or break a student's potential career path.

of information. If we take an inquiry approach to this issue, however, and examine the underlying assumptions , we may discover important information that can help us all better assess the needs of our learners and our programs.

If so much is going to ride on the results of a standardized test, perhaps we should take a moment to step back and think about the purpose of a standardized test, what it can and cannot tell us and if indeed this is the most appropriate test to use.

Inquiring minds want to know.

☑

Review:
Using Phenomenal Changes – Stories of Participants in the Portfolio Project

by
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I have been thinking a lot about coming up with a better model of portfolio assessment in our school so we can be more consistent with the process. In the past, I would always come to the same wall that I have with authentic assessment: you can't force people to do it if they don't have a full understanding of the process. To truly implement any type of authentic assessment, people need to buy into the concept.

But how do you accomplish that when there just doesn't seem to be enough time to nurture the process? It seemed serendipitous that I was asked to review *Phenomenal Changes – Stories of Participants in the Portfolio Project* for *Adventures in Assessment* as it allowed me to focus on how to get both me and the teachers at the International Language Institute (ILI) of MA in Northampton more involved in improving how we do portfolio assessment at the school.

(This is the first of a two-part article as we won't finish our project until the next *Adventures in Assessment* is out; we all know that Authentic Assessment is an ongoing project.)

Phenomenal Changes – Stories of Participants in the Portfolio Project is an excellent staff development tool for portfolio development. At the ILI, we are using the text as a springboard for discussions about portfolio assessment.

The articles in *Phenomenal Changes* — a series of interviews with the participants of the project and the Project Director Melody Schneider — are very reader friendly. The text is divided into five areas: ABE, ESOL, Literacy Councils, Compensatory Education, and Administrators.

We have been using several different variations of authentic assessment tools at the International Language Institute over the years. At a recent staff meeting I asked the teachers how it was going with portfolio assessment in their classes. The teachers replied that they have the students using dialogue journals and learning journals and that they had been collecting things, but they didn't really feel as if they had a handle on the concept of portfolios. We agreed portfolios could take many forms, but that the group needed a model with which we all felt comfortable. I brought out *Phenomenal Changes* and asked if they would be interested in reading about the experiences of other teachers working on portfolio assessment. They were very interested, so we agreed to read and discuss articles for the next five weeks. During curriculum week at the end of the program we would put together all our ideas and develop criteria for portfolio selection and review. We plan to put our findings into place for the program that begins in January.

We decided to begin our weekly meetings with 30 minutes dedicated to portfolio assessment discussion. (Weekly meetings usually last an hour and a half and include both part-time and full-time staff.) The 30-minute segment would be divided into three steps. First, we would discuss our reactions to an article. Second, we would discuss how this article would/wouldn't relate to our program. Third, we would establish some action plans to implement in the next month or during curriculum week. Since the staff are ESL teachers, we started off with the two articles in the text that discussed portfolio assessment with ESL teachers.

The first comment that came up the following week at our first discussion was that everyone would have preferred the articles to be actually written by the writer and that vernacular usage was a bit difficult to read. We agreed that Melody Schneider does a good job of letting the reader hear the project participant's voice.

One teacher said she would have liked more information about the contents of a portfolio and more nuts and bolts about the end product. A discussion ensued about how we could look at lists that have been prepared by other people, but would that help find our own way of doing portfolio assessment? We agreed that not having the "nuts and bolts" up front enabled us to look at portfolio assessment without being directed as to what we should be doing. This discussion led to asking, 'what should we be putting in the portfolios?' One teacher said that, since her students were only in class six hours a week, how about including things that the students accomplished outside class?

Another teacher commented that the articles really helped her realize that she needs to get out of her students' way. She felt that she was holding their hands too much and that they needed to "experience" something rather than having her always telling them what to do.

We also talked about the dialogue journals that our students keep. Some students write a lot and "play" with the language, using what they have learned in class while others write the same thing every week: 'I went to church and cleaned my house.' How can we show students their progress if they write the same things week after week?

Our discussion led to considering ways students can see their progress through guided writing, writing with a specific task, and making the writing process interesting for students. We also ended up sharing a writing tool called Fundex of Individualized Activities for English Language Practice* that the teachers weren't previously aware of and became very excited to discover.

The teachers acknowledge that both students and teachers need to understand why we're doing portfolio assessment. "I need to understand why we're doing this. How do I encourage it to be taken seriously? How do I motivate?" We admitted that we as teachers should also be keeping portfolios about our teaching practices. Included in our portfolios would by our own Learning Journals (a booklet of weekly assessment tools kept by the students (see *Adventures in Assessment*, Volume 5, "Evolution of an Assessment Tool"). These would be completed in class while our students were filling out their own Learning Journals. One teacher said her students might take portfolio assessment more seriously if they saw her taking it seriously.

Naturally, we went over the allotted 30 minutes. At the end of the meeting we did feedback about using the articles as a springboard for discussion and all the teachers were enthusiastic: "There were a lot of things that I got from these articles," "I like making time to do this," and "It's kind of nice to have an academic focus in our meeting, rather than just going over the attendance list."

---

* *Writing Inspirations: A Fundex of Individualized Activities for English Language Practice* by Arlene Marcus, Prolingua Asscoiates, 15 Elm Street, Brattleboro, VT 05301, (802) 257-7779.

As I listened and participated in the meeting, I realized that we are all stakeholders in the process and that we have to realize that authentic assessment is a change of practice for everyone: teachers, students and administrators.

I also realized that a variety of people interested in portfolio assessment could use *Phenomenal Changes – Stories of Participants in the Portfolio Project*. The readings are just as useful for people just starting out as for people that have been doing it for awhile.

We left our meeting excited and armed with two more articles for the next week. We don't know exactly how our portfolio system will be in January, but at this point I feel strongly that with the consistency of the weekly meetings about portfolio assessment and using *Phenomenal Changes*, there will be some phenomenal changes of how we all look at portfolio assessment at ILI.

to be continued

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Phenomenal Changes: Stories of Participants in the Portfolio Project, Melody Schneider, Project Director, with Hanna Fingeret and Loren McGrail, Literacy South available from Peppercorn Books, P.O. Box 1766, Durham, NC 27702, (919) 688-9313.

adventures

Learner-centered approaches to assessment & evaluation in adult literacy

Volume 1[illegible]

Editor: Alison Simmons

Assistant Editor: Rick Schwartz

ASSESSMENT

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SABES

System for Adult Basic Education Support

SABES is the System for Adult Basic Education Support, a comprehensive training and technical assistance initiative for adult literacy educators and programs. Its goal is to strengthen and enhance literacy services and thus to enable adult learners to attain literacy skills.

SABES accomplishes this goal through staff and program development workshops, consultation, mini-courses, mentoring and peer coaching, and other training activities provided by five Regional Support Centers located at community colleges throughout Massachusetts. SABES also offers a 15-hour Orientation that introduces new staff to adult education theory and practice and enables them to build support networks. Visit us at our website: www.sabes.org

SABES also maintains an adult literacy Clearinghouse to collect, evaluate, and disseminate ABE materials, curricula, methodologies, and program models, and encourages the development and use of practitioner and learner-generated materials. Each of the five SABES Regional Support Centers similarly offers program support and a lending library. SABES maintains an Adult Literacy Hotline, a statewide referral service which responds to calls from new learners and volunteers. The Hotline number is 1-800-447-8844.

☑

The SABES Central Resource Center, a program of World Education, publishes a statewide quarterly newsletter, "Bright Ideas," and journals on topics of interest to adult literacy professionals, such as this volume of "Adventures in Assessment."

The first three volumes of "Adventures in Assessment" present a comprehensive view of the state of practice in Massachusetts through articles written by adult literacy practitioners. Volume 1, ***Getting Started****, includes start-up and intake activities; Volume 2,* ***Ongoing****, shares tools for ongoing assessment as part of the learning process; Volume 3,* ***Looking Back, Starting Again****, focuses on tools and procedures used at the end of a cycle or term, including self, class, and group evaluation by both teachers and learners. Volume 4 covered a range of interests, and Volume 5,* ***The Tale of the Tools*** *is dedicated to reflecting on Component 3 tools of alternative assessment. Volume 6,* ***Responding to the Dream Conference****, is dedicated to responses to Volumes 1-5. Volume 7,* ***The Partnership Project****, highlighted writings from a mentoring project for practioners interested in learning about participatory assessment. Volumes 8-11 cover a range of topics, including education reform, workplace education, learner involvement in assessment, etc.*

We'd like to see your contribution. If you would like to submit an article for our Winter 1999 issue, contact Editor Alison Simmons.

Opinions expressed in "Adventures in Assessment" are those of the authors and not necessarily the opinions of SABES or its funders.

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Learner-centered approaches to assessment & evaluation in adult literacy

Volume 11

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Introduction

Volume 11: Aspects, Levels, and Perspectives

by
Alison Simmons

Editor
SABES Central
Resource Center /
World Education

As a staff developer and a teacher, assessment remains a daunting prospect for me. I am often overwhelmed with the amount of knowledge and skills that I need to further my work in this area. I must get to a place where I feel comfortable with the choices that have been made about assessment practices, both for my students and for other teachers.

I want to ensure that I am providing opportunities for students to help them identify what it is they want to learn and opportunities to see that learning. I also want to provide opportunities for teachers to get the information they need to make more informed decisions about their assessment practices, both in their classrooms and in their programs.

There are many different perspectives on assessment, accountability, and evaluation. Some connect and others seem miles apart. In order for me to make sense of the information and the differences in perspectives and to make informed choices, I need to be able to look at the whole and try to see where the connections are.

Often we are engrossed in one aspect of assessment, usually the one that affects us the most. This often depends largely on the role(s) we play in adult education. We need to be informed and aware of the other aspects, perspectives and levels of assessment in our work. We need to see how they can fit together and how each perspective and level tries to answer the questions Are the adults in our programs receiving what they need? Are they making progress towards their goals and are our programs providing opportunities for this to happen? We need to look at the various levels of assessment and accountability — local and state and federal — and negotiate between them" (Heide Spruck Wrigley, *AiA*, Volume 11).

When I read the articles for this volume of *Adventures in Assessment*, I am much less daunted by the ongoing task of trying to "negotiate" and understand the different levels mentioned above. The articles in this issue seem to offer opportunities to think of different aspects of assessment. They raise questions not just about a specific tool, but also how assessment is connected to teaching and learning and how it can be connected to accountability for programs as well as teachers.

I do not think the articles solve the questions of understanding, choosing, reporting gains, and promoting assessment practices, but I feel less anxious. Through the articles I feel we are moving closer to an understanding or an awareness of how and what to negotiate in the world of assessment.

Marie Hassat's article looks at assessment and curriculum development. She has adapted a framework for teaching by Herbert Kohl and talks about how she adapted this to her program and assessment practices.

Caroline Gear and **Joanna Scott** move away from assessment for students' progress and ask us to look at what we as teachers do in our classrooms to assess and evaluate our lessons and classes. Both provide a framework for reflecting on our lessons. It helps us to look at our teaching to see if we really are providing opportunities for students to learn and to attain their goals.

In her article, **Linda Gosselin** reviews the many tools and ideas that have been presented in *Adventures in Assessment* over the years. She asks the questions of learner centered approaches to assessment: What does this really mean? If we are doing it, what does this really look like? When do we involve students and how? She invites us to critically assess our own practices and the roles we ask students to play.

Glen Cotton and **Cheryl Grant** from North Carolina discuss their action research projects. They looked at the question of assessment in ESOL classes and reflected on their own practices. They both hint at the notion that assessment should not be separate from instruction. They state that there are ways for even the beginning language learner to get information that helps set a course for instruction as well as elicits information about the learners' goals and progress.

Maria Elena Gonzalez takes us on a journey to the world of assessment tools. She mirrors the process most of us go through when trying to select a tool. She realizes that there are many tools available and, although we need to consider the many levels of assessment, we need also to consider the other factors that are involved in teaching adults. Most importantly, we must constantly ask ourselves "What do I really need to know?" This helps narrow our search, and keeps us grounded in what is really important for both the teacher and the students.

Janet Isserlis talks about actual learning and accountability and sees the need for both. They may not be mutually exclusive but we are often driven to choose between the two. She also talks about the need for teachers to make connections between assessment and learning. The connections need to be an ongoing part of the staff development that we provide. "We need to know what connecting assessment to learning looks like and how to help learners see their own progress through multiple lenses" (Janet Isserlis, *AiA*, Volume 11).

Heide Spruck Wrigley observes assessment at the federal and state levels. Where do we go from here? She offers a much-needed, hopeful perspective that looks at all levels of assessment and negotiating among funders, programs and teachers.

In *Learning from Experience*, **Diane Lizotte** talks about her action research project. She looked at the strengths and weaknesses of the ESOLA test and found that the test was a good tool for placement but not for measuring learner progress over time.

The teachers at the **ACCCESS** program in Hyannis, Massachusetts, reviewed the book *"New Ways in Assessment,"* published by TESOL. They sampled a few of the activities in the book in their classroom. They found that the assessment activities were engaging for students and teachers and that the book had a lot of good ideas to try.

Many questions arise as we continue our journey, searching for authentic ways to assess students, programs, teachers, and ourselves. The articles in this issue direct readers to view the overall picture of assessment and reflect on the ever-present and pared-down question, "How could this work in my program?"

As always I invite readers to respond to these articles and to maintain the dialogue of what works and doesn't work in the process of using authentic assessment in our programs.

☑

— Alison Simmons

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Evaluation that Looks at Achievement Realistically

by
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Ph.D.

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Every teacher tells stories about the students whose spectacular successes or gut-wrenching defeats help us to define what we do. Less easy to articulate are the stories of the students whose experiences we return to again and again, wondering, "What if?" or "If only..." as we try to figure out how we could have helped them more.

This is especially true for adult educators. The structure of our work and the needs of our students force us to focus on the end result: passing the GED exam, moving into a higher level class, becoming a U.S. citizen. But as we all know, the dedication and hard work of students and teachers do not always lead to the achievement of these goals. Inadequate child care, medical problems, housing crises, and other real-life challenges can undermine the progress of even the most determined students, in the classroom of the most supportive teacher.

After facing this problem in my own classrooms, I began searching for a tool that would allow me to deal with the stop-in, stop-out nature of adult education more productively. I wanted an evaluative tool that would allow me to quantify the progress made by students who left before passing the GED exam or increasing their skills by a grade level; address more specifically the kinds of qualitative learning that do not appear in an English or a social studies curriculum; and give students a way to see that they have learned, even if they have not yet reached their target goals.

In the course of reading and research, I found a framework by Herbert Kohl. Kohl's teaching career began in the Harlem public schools in 1962; his first book, *36 Children*, is an account of his work with that first class. During his career as a teacher, he has worked in a wide variety of traditional and non-traditional settings, with students who range in age from kindergarteners to adults. As a prolific writer and researcher, Kohl has focused primarily on the ways that schools sometimes hamper, rather than enhance, the learning process of many students, and suggests a variety of ways for teachers to help students who are, in his words, "creatively maladjusted" to a system that has been a source of frustration and humiliation. In his most recent book, *The Discipline of Hope: Learning from a Lifetime of Teaching*, Kohl declares that "there are at least six basic skills, which encompass all the trivial mechanical skills that people want obedient and passive [students] to acquire" and which, if used as a framework for curriculum and evaluation, "respects the intelligence and moral sensibility" of students (1998, 234-35). It is this framework which I have adopted for my classes, and which I believe has allowed me not only to measure more accurately the genuine achievements of my students, but has also helped me to think more carefully about course content and structure. The rest of this article will outline the six skills Kohl has identified, the ways that I have used them with my students, and suggestions for implementation in others' classrooms.

HERBERT KOHL'S SIX BASIC SKILLS

Skill 1: The ability to use language well and thoughtfully.

This skill has obvious application for teachers whose work focuses largely on literacy, but it also presents opportunities for re-thinking our methods and goals. We have all done what we could to help students use language well, but I think I am not the only teacher whose classes have been, on occasion, less than thoughtful. But if we think of literacy skills as encompassing what are often referred to as the four language arts—reading, writing, speaking, and listening—this first skill can help us to look at our work more closely.

None of the lists of questions presented here are exhaustive or authoritative; one of the real strengths of Kohl's framework lies in its flexibility.

Some of the questions I've used for evaluating the development of language use include:

- Has the student's vocabulary increased?
- Does the student read more willingly, from a wider variety of materials? Have I helped the student to see reading as a source of information and pleasure, and not just as another requirement?
- Has the student's writing become a more accurate reflection of what he/she *intended* to say? Has the number of mechanical errors decreased? Is the student more comfortable as a writer?
- Has the student's skill in oral discussion/debate improved? Can he/she construct an argument that relies on logic more than opinion or volume?

None of the lists of questions presented here are exhaustive or authoritative; one of the real strengths of Kohl's framework lies in its flexibility. These are the kinds of questions I use when I evaluate my GED and Basics II classes. An ESOL teacher will probably come up with different ways of looking at this skill. This particular way of looking at skills has value only when teachers tailor it to the strengths and challenges of their individual students and classes.

Skill 2: The ability to think through a problem and experiment with solutions.

This may be one of the most difficult skills for students to master, and one of the most important. Frequently, students who lack confidence about their ability become nervous and flustered when problems are presented in new ways. Because it is impossible to predict the form of every problem, question, or assignment they will face in their educational careers, it is important to help them make connections between diverse problems and let them see that they have the ability to take on new challenges. This is also the skill that helps students see the application of various class-based skills in real life situations. The person who can estimate while working on math problems can estimate in the grocery store. A person who can write a 200-word essay can write a cover letter for a job application.

The questions I use for evaluating this skill include:

- Has the student's tolerance for ambiguity increased? Can he/she stick with a problem until it becomes clear, or does he/she give up easily?
- Can the student see points of commonality between and among different things?
- Can the student understand the difference between the problem and the way the problem has been presented?

- Can the student judge the relative merit of several different solutions to the same problem?
- Does the student see how context and culture affect our ideas about what the right answer is to a given question?

This is often the most difficult part of student's learning to assess. Many teachers have been trained, or have received their own education, in an environment that emphasizes coverage of content over comprehension of process. Assessing this skill requires teachers to spend more time listening than talking, more time following students' ideas than presenting information. Class discussions provide an opportunity for developing this flexibility of thinking, as they allow exposure to a variety of viewpoints, and may demonstrate more clearly than any lecture that there is often more than one way to approach a problem. Students who can be flexible in their approach to problems are more likely to achieve greater success than their less-flexible classmates; it is in their best interests that we all find ways to help them develop this skill.

Skill 3: The ability to understand scientific and technological ideas and to use tools.

This skill has more, and more vocal, proponents across the educational spectrum than any other on this list, but again, it is the way that Kohl has framed the skill that makes it so valuable. We may cover a variety of scientific/technological topics in class, but we do not always provide opportunities for experimentation, practice and reflection. Many students use sophisticated technologies without a second thought—VCRs, beepers, cell phones, ATMs, and video games—but few of them have reflected on the ways that those technologies relate to the kinds of scientific and technological material we cover in our classes. By linking understanding and use, Kohl invites teachers to make explicit connections between the classroom and the real world. It should also lead teachers to reflect on their own relationships with, and values concerning, science and technology as they are a part of daily life.

We may cover a variety of scientific/technological topics in class, but we do not always provide opportunities for experimentation, practice and reflection.

Good questions about this skill might include:

- What is the student's comfort level with computers?
- Does the student understand how technology affects his/her daily life?
- Can the student understand essays/articles in the popular press about science and technology issues?
- Does the student recognize the ways that science has changed our ideas about the quality and length of human life?

The questions a teacher chooses for this skill will vary widely according to the goals and backgrounds of students. Particularly with respect to medical technology, discussions of these topics address not only science, but values and ethics. I have found that pursuing questions like this often creates natural, powerful links between the different skills and content areas students are trying to master; these are excellent issues to write and debate about.

Skill 4: The ability to use the imagination.

Using one's imagination is a little addressed but crucial element of academic success. Students who can use their imaginations constructively are at a real advantage in their reading, their writing, and their ability to understand new material.

Like the ability to think through problems and experiment with solutions (Skill 2), the ability to use one's imagination creates a necessary level of flexibility. Without it, much of literature, film, science, and mathematics will be beyond reach. But this is also a skill that most teachers, consciously or not, attempt to develop in every class. Each time we begin with "Let's suppose," "Hypothetically," or "Could you suggest a situation where . . ." we are helping students learn to imagine in specific and useful ways.

Some of the questions I've used for this skill are as follows:

- Can the student empathize with another person or fictional character?
- Can the student come up with alternate endings to a story?
- Does the student believe that he/she has the ability to transcend current limitations?
- Does the student understand the use of metaphor and symbol in film, fiction, etc.?
- Can the student come up with innovative solutions to problems?
- Does the student think through potential situations before they occur, in order to plan how to respond?

Most of us, of course, do all these things without thinking about them. But making these skills explicit and concrete for students helps them see how the skills they've learned in their day-to-day lives can be of value to them in the classroom, and vice versa.

Skill 5: The ability to understand how people function in groups.

Many students in adult education classes lack formal and informal experience with structures and institutions that teachers take for granted. Much of their experience with formal institutions may, in fact, be negative, whether the institutions in question are schools, medical facilities, or social service agencies. If they are not working, and are living alone with children, students may feel isolated, and rarely have chances outside our classrooms to develop the social and interpersonal skills that they will need in the workplace or in higher education. Every time we ask students to follow class rules, to debate with each other according to certain guidelines, or open up discussion about social science topics like psychology or sociology, we are helping students to develop this very important skill.

Questions for evaluating students' knowledge/skill in this area may include:

- Does the student understand the difference between group membership and individual identity? Does he/she see how those two roles may conflict?
- Can the student identify causes of harmony or discord among groups of people?
- Does the student understand the differences that may surface between group interactions and one-to-one interactions among the members of a group?
- Does the student see how cultures/societies affect the behavior of different groups (gender groups, religious groups, etc.)?
- Can the student talk comfortably about the difference between "nature" and "nurture"?
- Does the student recognize the different ways in which people may be grouped within a society, and some of the factors that determine that grouping?

Many teachers will find that these questions can be pursued in written work, giving students the opportunity to develop new understandings and insights more effectively than they can in discussion. Good essay topics that address these issues can be found in many adult literacy and GED prep materials. It may be especially useful to have students write about and then discuss these issues in class, thus combining their new knowledge about the ways that groups function with opportunities to put that knowledge into practice.

Skill 6: The ability to go about learning something for yourself, and the skills and confidence to be a learner all your life.

In many ways, this last skill addresses all the others, and brings me back to the reason I went in search of this kind of assessment. Many of our students will leave our classes before achieving their goals, and it may be some time before they are able to return. The degree to which we are able to build this skill determines, more than anything else, the value of the time they spend in our classrooms. As Kohl points out, we "need to find ways to help people learn for themselves so that they can make informed decisions on major issues that affect their lives rather than shift responsibility" to people who may not have the knowledge to help, or who may not have students' best interests at heart (1998, 151).

Most of us have forgotten the bulk of what we learned in school, and we would be unrealistic if we expected our adult students to be any different. As important as the rules of grammar, or the ability to do long division, is the ability to continue learning. We know that a GED diploma does not guarantee success, though it is a significant achievement. As teachers, we need to see our work not as getting people over hurdles, but as equipping them to choose their own hurdles, and clear them under their own power.

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Questions for this skill might include:

- Does the student know how to use a dictionary? A thesaurus? Has he/she developed the habit of using them?
- Is the student informed about current events that may affect his/her life? Where does the information come from?
- Can the student distinguish between an informed and an uninformed opinion on a given issue?
- Does the student know how to use the Internet? A library card catalogue?
- Can the student seek out knowledgeable people in situations where he/she needs assistance? How does he/she find those people?
- Is the student aware of local, state, and national resources that will help him/her to achieve further goals?

The list of possible questions for this skill is nearly endless, and depends greatly on the specific needs, abilities, and backgrounds of individual students. Many students will struggle in their attempts to become their own best resources; years of difficulty, and/or school failure, often undermine confidence, and diminish students' willingness to take risks.

SUGGESTIONS FOR USE

No one approach to this framework can be considered "best." Rather, the benefit of using these skills as a model for curriculum development, course structure, and/or assessment lies in each individual instructor's or program's decisions about what will benefit students. My own use of these skills as a way of thinking about student progress has proven beneficial both for my students and for my teaching, because it has given us a way to look at what should be considered progress toward educational goals.

The most significant benefit of this approach in my own classroom has been the degree of holism it allows. Thinking about skills in terms of students, rather than content areas, leads me to make better, more integrated choices about how to structure class time, and how to combine the treatment of various subject areas. Additionally, when I think in terms of students developing skills, rather than students collecting knowledge, it becomes easier to see where and when progress happens. We have not abandoned the traditional goals of adult education, but have found a richer, more nuanced context in which to place them.

Genuine education is not a matter of accumulation, but of acculturation. As we introduce concepts and academic content, we simultaneously introduce our sense of what should be valued, what counts as knowledge, and how learning should take place. Student success rests as much, or more, on their ability to follow the rules, implicit and explicit, that govern institutions. For adult learners who wish to pursue higher education, job retraining, and employment, learning accepted patterns of behavior and classroom practices is critical for success.

Looking at student development in the terms I have outlined allows me to consider what I need to do to help each individual become an educated person not necessarily in terms of a transcript or degree, but as it affects their stance, perspective, and way of approaching the world. I would suggest that mastery of the skills presented here can lead to increased academic independence, self-confidence, and reflectiveness, the qualities we say we want to see in an educated person. When we pay careful, systematic attention to the habits of mind that support learning, as Herbert Kohl urges us to do, we move a long way toward making our students' time in our classrooms valuable, practical, and immediate.

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Are We Practicing What We Preach?

by
Caroline Gear

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Since the International Language Institute of MA (ILI) opened in 1984, the *modus operandi* in the classroom has been integrating activities. Instead of assigning one specific activity to each skill area, we take one activity and stretch it (without stretching the point too much) to include all the skill areas. For example, instead of focusing just on the speaking/listening skills by having learners discuss a topic, we expand the activity to include a reading and a writing activity connected to that topic. This way of approaching language teaching allows learners to focus on the whole picture rather than a series of disconnected activities practicing the different skill areas; it appears that our learners learn better this way. Watching an entire program instead of channel surfing with a remote allows you to see the whole picture in context rather than snippets. How can we evaluate (as teachers and administrators) whether we are actually integrating activities in the classroom and then reflect on its benefits?

It is important that we understand how integrating activities is connected to the theoretical way we look at language. Being that we are language teachers, what better way to demonstrate this idea than with a visual? At ILI, we use the "The Wheel of Concepts of Language" to show how the areas of language are connected *(see Figure 1).*

The wheel is used because of the idea of moveable parts. In the center of the wheel are the core skill areas of communication. (In cultures where language is simply an oral tradition, there are two main areas of communication: listening and speaking. Since English has both an oral and written tradition, we refer to the four skill areas listed above) Outside and connected to the core of the wheel are the tools, or other concepts of language. These tools play a role in the learners' development and strengthening of the skill areas, and his/her overall ability to communicate. As one moves out from the center of the wheel, each section moves about to mix and match with each other, and can do so simultaneously. For example, a speaking activity may work on pronunciation, grammar, intonation, and culture all at the same time.

At ILI the Course Progress Report we use is connected to the Wheel of Concepts. The Course Progress Report *(see page 17)* shows how our classes are structured, documents what is covered in the class and clarifies how classes are integrated. A checklist is part of the Course Progress Report and mirrors the Wheel of Concepts. At the end of each class, teachers review the course progress sheet and check off which areas have been covered. This checklist allows teachers to see if they are integrating activities, which skill area needs more attention, and if they are spending too much time on one skill area and not enough time on the others.

COURSE PROGRESS REPORT

The Course Progress Report includes lots of space for teachers' notes. Teachers

THE WHEEL OF CONCEPTS

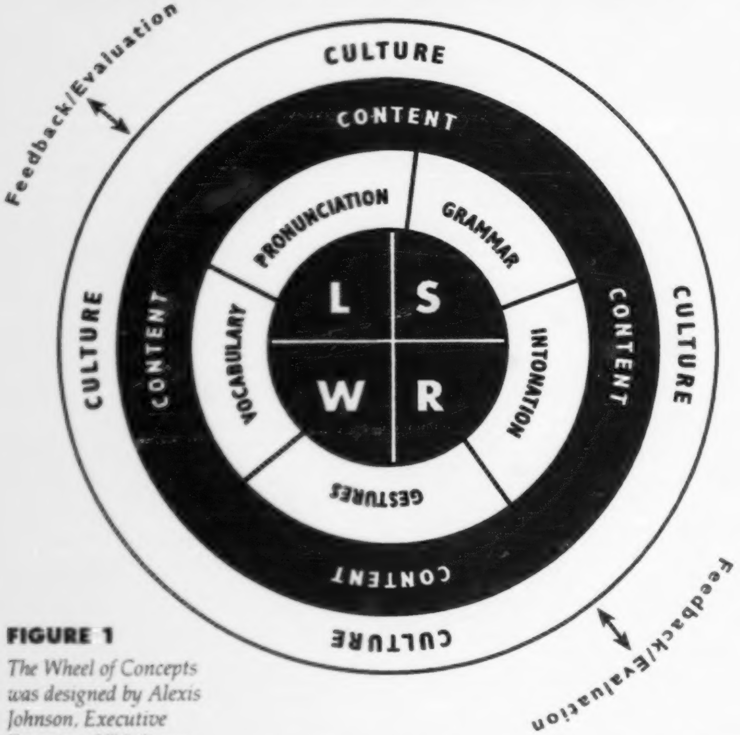

FIGURE 1

The Wheel of Concepts was designed by Alexis Johnson, Executive Director of ILI. It can also be found in the Commonwealth Literacy Corps Volunteer Tutor Training Manual.

decide how this is used and have used the space to jot down how the activity worked (or didn't) along with ideas for future activities, for documenting suggestions from learners that came up during feedback, and as a teachers' journal and an instrument for teacher reflection at the end of each class.

At ILI we strive to have students speaking 60%-80% of the time. At the bottom of the Course Progress Report is the question "Are students speaking 60-80% of the time?" to help teachers remember that our focus is getting learners to speak.

Also at the bottom of each Course Progress Report is a series of reflective questions for teachers to ask to get feedback about the class. What activities/skills did we cover? What did you learn from these activities? Would you have changed? What would you like to see in the next class? The arrows to and from Evaluation/Feedback on the Wheel of Concepts demonstrate the connection between what is going on in class and the importance of feedback and evaluation as part of the structure of the class. Teachers and learners alike need to understand why these questions are being asked and that the information retrieved from these questions is being used to drive the curriculum. Therefore, feedback from learners needs to be highlighted in a way that shows learners that we are listening. This is an important step in getting learners to understand that they must take on the responsibility for their own learning.

We rely heavily on oral feedback at the end of each class. Often new teachers run out of time and when asked after class if they have done feedback, the answer is "No, but I'll be sure to do it tomorrow." Having the questions on the Course Progress Report helps teachers remember that these questions need to be asked consistently so that students continue to drive the curriculum. We also include a checkoff area under evaluation on the Course Progress Report to ensure that it has been done.

We spend a lot of time at ILI talking about evaluation/assessment and making sure that doing feedback at the end of the class is not just an "add on" activity, but something the students see consistently and which becomes part of the class. The feedback section of the class could also be an integrated activity: in pairs learners talk about the activities and their feelings about the class/their progress. This is written down either by the student or the pair and is then shared with other students in the

COURSE PROGRESS REPORT

Date	Type of Activity	Speaking	Listening	Reading	Writing	Grammar	Vocabulary	Culture	Evaluation	Notes

Questions for feedback:

1. What activities/skills did we cover?
2. What did you learn from these activities?
3. Would you have changed any of these activities?
4. What would you like to see in the next class?
   Are students speaking 60-80% of the time?

class. Getting feedback from the students in this way helps them practice their listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.

Assessment is an on-going process and we know that we all need constant work on how we handle assessment in the class. Reviewing the Wheel of Concepts and how we use our Course Progress Reports is part of ILI's staff development. As suggested by teachers in a recent workshop, we are also going to include the Wheel of Concepts in the student handbook as a way of informing learners what is going on in the class. The Wheel of Concepts started out as being just for teachers, but we realize that having this available to learners will enable them to see how/why we structure our classes the way we do and the importance we put on learner feedback and integrating all skill areas. It will also keep us honest as to making sure that we practice what we preach.

☑

This is Only a Test...

by
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I first became aware of assessment in adult education during the initial development of the BEST, in the early '80s (see *AIA*, Volume 10, December, 1997, for a current consideration of the BEST). I had been working at a site in Rhode Island that had participated in the Center for Applied Linguistics' overall development of both the test and the performance levels it measured, but never clearly saw the connection between the test itself and educational practice. I began to understand the notion of accountability but I could never really tell how a particular score on the BEST would inform my teaching.

I still can't.

I can, of course, get a sense of what a learner's ability to take a test such as the BEST might be like based on his/her scores on one. I can see the range of content (life skills, math, science, reading comprehension) she knows and the kinds of items (essay, multiple choice, true/false, yes/no questions) that s/he is able to successfully complete or that s/he might miss. I can see if that learner has 'done school,' and to what extent, but for the most part, when working with adults with limited English language abilities and little prior schooling, most standardized tests are not teaching me very much about learners' strengths or needs.

I can most ably assist a learner in finding an appropriate class/level placement and meeting her educational goals by speaking to her, by looking at a writing sample, by learning about what she knows about in the world, where or if there's been prior schooling and in which language(s). This information gives me a sense of what a learner knows about using print as a resource for learning, and about her/his sense of what school can or should be. Learning about what s/he has done before coming to the learning center gives me a sense of what strengths and needs s/he's bringing to the learning process.

In some settings, placement tests are helpful to practitioners in appropriately directing learners into the levels offered within particular programs; in and of themselves, however, the tests have limited value. Some programs have developed their own tests, others rely on standardized tools. For many learners, though, any test is daunting. Learners who may already be nervous about coming to school really don't need to have an additional element of risk added to their initial encounter with the learning program.

In other settings, standardized tests are not useful to educators for placement or for progress assessment. They're either too difficult (so that beginning level learners 'bottom out,' gaining scores that hardly indicate anything about their abilities) or do not measure what learning has actually occurred within a classroom. Programs feel caught between a rock and hard place; they have to show some pre- and post-learning movement, and tend to minimize the test itself to learners ("it's just to help us help you find the right level/get a sense of where you are now/show that you've been here...").

Many programs *have* taken the time and energy to explore how testing can be used more appropriately, or how alternatives can be developed. Others report that learners who do show gains in standardized test scores feel encouraged by those gains.

But many practitioners indicate that tests terrify their students, or waste their time or that they can't possibly prepare students to take so many different tests. ("I can't send one out to a program that gives the TABE, another to a CASAS-based program, and yet others on to the GED…").

I maintain that you can, but that's not the point. If a learner identifies an academic goal for which testing will be an important and ongoing part of learning, there are strategies and approaches to prepare students to take tests and to pass them. Looking at the language of tests, the kinds of reading strategies that learners can use to make meaning and then to translate their understanding of that meaning into essay, multiple choice, true/false, or yes/no answers is possible. More important, however, is the question of what it is the students want to do.

As a state literacy resource center director, I not only work with and think about learners; I'm concerned, too, about program progress overall. I need to look at and think about ways to measure progress beyond gains made by individual learners, and to see how groups of learners progress over time. Looking beyond pedagogical concerns, I also need to be able to demonstrate learners' progress to those who fund programs and to those who make policy.

As a vehicle of accountability, and of reporting larger spheres of need (and accomplishment) to those who do not work directly with learners but who do determine funding patterns and policy, the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) has most recently become the standard against which everything we do is measured in some way. The NALS indicates that a sizable percentage of the population of this country is ill prepared to engage in higher order thinking skills, having assessed those skills on a pencil/paper test. The underlying assumption here is that higher order thinking can (only) be demonstrated in writing, and that this is an appropriate way of measuring such thinking. The NALS claims that it assesses real life skills, yet it measures an adult's ability to use those skills through a print-based medium. This is neither the time nor the place for a lengthy analysis of the NALS or its methodology. Rather it is a time to consider how it has been taken up as the largest umbrella under which all our other attempts at using test scores seem to fall.

The NALS, understandably, has been used to establish the need for increased services for learners. However, as a practitioner committed to not perpetuating deficit views of adult learning needs, I find it troublesome to contemplate the way these needs are flaunted through a rendering of NALS scores. Such renderings tend to emphasize adults' lack of abilities with literacy in order to play up the need for increased access to educational opportunities for adult learners. In addition to flogging NALS findings within their states, programs also grapple with using learner outcomes that are based on a variety of tests — using gains in test scores to prove their effectiveness as educational providers; using low scores to speak to the need for yet more services to be provided. None of us uses the NALS to measure our own learners' actual abilities, however, even if we accept that the NALS *could* provide us with useful information about those abilities.

At a recent state-level policy meeting, a suggestion was made that we actively seek correlations between the NALS and other standards (such as the GED), in order to set more precise goals around learner outcomes. Such goal setting in and of itself does not improve learning, though; it merely shifts the focus (yet again) in terms of what learners and educators are being asked to demonstrate.

It seems I'm really addressing two broad issues: actual learning and accountability and the endless need for funding. Both interest me in different ways. How can adminstrators (and teachers and learners for that matter) argue intelligently for a meaningful way of assessing progress while also dancing to the multiple tunes played by the funders to whom they are accountable? How do we translate what we know about learning into a form that can be understood readily by those who fund and support our work?

Again, it seems that speaking about testing and accountability is speaking about reporting, translating gains that students make on a particular test to funders or interested others to whom that information is important. The work done within the last decade on broadening the range of what counts and how we count it has contributed significantly to the field's understanding of the multiple ways in which learning can be measured. We still seem woefully incapable, however of translating actual learning gains into something that funders know, understand and appreciate as indications of learning having taken place. With constant turnover in the field itself, as well, we often need ongoing ways to assist ourselves, as practitioners, to learn to closely observe learners' work and to translate our own observations into better understandings of their strengths and abilities. Such understandings can inform our attempts to improve practice to meet learners' needs more appropriately. *Adventures in Assessment* is one way through which this work is being carried out, but more work on a program-based level is required if we really are to connect assessment and learning and move away from arbitrary and capricious testing and more closely into assessment that informs both learners and practitioners in meaningful ways.

How do we translate what we know about learning into a form that can be understood readily by those who fund and support our work?

Heide Wrigley (personal communication, August, 1998) suggests that we need to understand not only what works in terms of teaching/learning approaches and progress, but also "the implications ... for test development or assessment both large scale – program wide – and small scale, in the classroom." This close learning can barely be gleaned from a barrage of test scores – even tests that look at 'life skills.' (Both the BEST and CASAS have 'authentic' tasks, if you consider it authentic to talk about how you go to the bank or to the laundromat, or whatever else one does without explicit talk in L1 or L2.) Yet, again and again we insist on using standardized tests to get a sense of a group of learners' abilities so that we can report these abilities to funders. Nonetheless, I realize the significance of Heide's suggestion that standardized tests *can* show us progress across groups more clearly than they give us useful information for teaching. Information gleaned from test scores can help us to see how groups of learners perform over periods of time. They give us a sense of a body of learners responding to tests of a body of knowledge.

Increased assessment — giving more tests — however, can not improve programs or learning until and unless those assessment instruments tell teachers about how their learners learn and don't learn. Heide Wrigley's article in this issue addresses those broader program and policy concerns, those big picture pieces that classroom teachers may not be aware of but which drive their work, one way or another, through shifts in policy, funding and mandates.

In terms of local programming and professional development, Heide's suggestion that "we can either go to a profile system or we can develop a framework that combines some deeper classroom-based assessments with some quicker assessments that are done across classrooms and can be compared across programs (writing samples, for example, or participation in an interview or a discussion)" makes good sense. As Heide suggests, if we believe that something is worth teaching, we then need to know if students have learned it. How we go about getting that information is a central question.

We need to know what connecting assessment to learning looks like, how to help learners see their own progress through multiple lenses

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

As indicated above, the work of learning how to understand learner progress needs to be integrated into ongoing professional development. We need to know what connecting assessment to learning looks like, how to help learners see their own progress through multiple lenses (longer journal entries, fewer mistakes at the blackboard, recognition of positive changes from teachers and from fellow learners). Several years ago, Francine Collignon and I undertook an action research process to develop one form of qualitative assessment of a group of beginning level ESOL literacy learners at the International Institute of Rhode Island. The resulting grid was a useful vehicle for us to review learner progress on a monthly level and to show our funder 'evidence' of that progress. The process of reviewing notes on classes, learners' writing, interaction in class and general activity informed those grids and helped us shift our teaching practice accordingly. We never found a standardized test to help us get this information, nor were we obliged to submit scores throughout the course of that particular three-year grant. The work of documenting classes, reviewing those notes and discussing learner gains was time consuming. We had a relatively small number of learners, and time for preparation and analysis of our work. Most programs do not have these necessary luxuries.

There are 'down and dirty' ways of looking at learner progress. In addition to deciding what it is we want to assess (progress with writing? pronunciation? mastery of certain grammatical forms?), there are other factors that contribute to learning: class size, previous education, situational and dispositional barriers, gender, age and myriad other realities of adults' lives. Classroom teachers know that these factors are all as important to learning as the quality of teaching itself. We still see, though, that a better test doesn't give us a better program. So where are we now?

It seems that practitioners and administrators are still grappling with the issues I've raised above. Nancy Fritz, an ESOL teacher at the Genesis Center in Providence, is working on a mini-grant to study existing assessment protocols, in the hopes of adapting one to use with her students and to share with colleagues as the Center considers revising its curriculum. Nancy speaks to her concerns as a classroom teacher and as a member of a particular educational community:

> *During the 1997-98 academic year, I taught an intermediate level class of ESOL adult learners in a program that provides ESOL instruction at four different levels for five hours a day, five days a week. During the year, I came to realize some of the problems inherent in trying to assess our learners' progress. This experience has led me to try to find or develop some instruments that will be helpful to me, other teachers and to our students in measuring growth in English. I'm doing this with the support of a mini-grant from the Literacy Resources/R.I. – the state's literacy resource center.*
>
> *In our ESOL classes we currently use the written form of the BEST test which is administered at the beginning of the year and again at the end in June. The problem that I see with the BEST test is that it is very difficult for many of our beginning level students. They have to guess at many of the answers and if they happen to guess better in September than they do in June, their scores actually go down. I saw this happen to a few students who had shown a great deal of improvement in reading, writing, and speaking English during the year. The BEST test did not reflect the progress.*
>
> *In addition to the BEST test, we kept an ongoing portfolio assessment for each student. I think the idea of portfolio assessment is great, but the lack of time and the necessity to teach a large number of students made it impossible for me to do a good job. In putting together the portfolios, I also felt that we lacked any means of measuring the progress that had been made. Progress was evident if one took the time to read the material in the portfolio, but for a quick review this is difficult.*
>
> *I am looking for assessment instruments that will yield a quantifiable result. Many of my students asked me during the year for 'grades' or 'report cards' like their children receive in school. I am not interested in such a cut-and-dried approach to documenting progress, but I would like to be able to show measurable results to students. In spite of the fact that they knew their English was getting better, they could provide numerous examples of things they could do now that they couldn't do before, and they could see their progress in their portfolios, they wanted this tangible 'measure' put on their English progress. I would like to be able to take two pieces of writing done at intervals of several months and compare them according to criteria that are realistic for our learners and that also serve as a guide to good writing for them. The writing samples would receive a score based on how well they measure up to the criteria. In think this procedure could also be done with samples of spoken English. I think that this type of assessment would satisfy our desire for holistic assessment while at the same time provide a quantifiable result that would please the students, give them a sense of accomplishment, and make a quick review possible for teachers. I'm hopeful that I can find such instruments to use during the coming year.*

Nancy worries that "wanting some quantifiable assessment isn't too contrary to the ideas in *Adventures in Assessment*. I'm not really obsessed with numbers and I understand that there are lots of drawbacks. I just think it would be helpful to have." This concern indicates to me part of what's been ingrained in adult education people for many, many years. The need for numbers exists in constant tension with the need for actual information with which learners can see their own progress, teach-

Testing might give us some information about how well they've learned whatever content/skills we hope to have taught, but we need to be mindful of what is it learners are hoping to gain, what we want these tests to do, and to tell us.

ers and learners can talk about that progress and most importantly actual learning can be seen and increased. What we need seems light years away from what we're finding on the TABE, on the BEST, through CASAS and even the GED.

Nancy will most likely develop an adapted tool from the many instruments she's examining and will share her findings with her colleagues at the Genesis Center and with others in a workshop later this fall. I wonder, though, how far this learning will be able to assist us as a state (and by extension, I hope, as a field) in finding a more satisfactory way of reporting learners' progress. Meeting with sharing/discussion groups, posting findings on Literacy Resources/RI's website, and informally communicating with colleagues are all ways to consider getting the word out about Nancy's work and about other possibilities around assessment. We seem to endlessly consider, though, what useful assessment does and looks like, with little hope of implementing 'official' assessment methods that funders can accept (see, for example, NCLE's posting on research into assessment, 9/98).

One hopeful movement across this state and across the country is the evolution of the standards designed through Equipped for the Future, an undertaking of the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL). Sondra Stein, NIFL Senior Research Associate and Director, Equipped for the Future, relates that Equipped for the Future lessons "start from what adults need to know and be able to do in REAL LIFE, integrate skills instruction into work on meaningful projects, and assess learning results by looking at the application of skills in the context of carrying out real life tasks." Dr. Stein acknowledges that there is "a ways to go before this translates into a framework for accountability" and proactively invites the field to contribute to and participate into this next step of the project.

Heide takes up the difficulties inherent in assessing even skills and tasks that learners themselves identify as being important. While not wanting to lose sight of those difficultires, I am also hopeful about the learning that may occur, at least within programs and classrooms, as a result of the work on the EFF standards as part of a broader ongoing series of professional development events and activities. These events and activities can include practitioner inquiry, development of in-house assessment tools, attention to active listening and observation, work with learners in naming goals and learning about how progress occurs, and investigations into learning styles. The possibilities are many.

In the long run, though, the same thorny issues remain. No matter how well teachers learn how to meet their learners' needs and work from their strengths, it seems there will always be someone external to the learning process who will want to know how it is we know that learners have learned something and what it is that they have learned. Testing might give us some information about how well they've learned whatever content/skills we hope to have taught, but we need to be mindful of what is it learners are hoping to gain, what we want these tests to do, and to tell us. An increase in testing, or a shift in the focus of testing will not in and of itself improve learning. It might improve reporting, but will anyone learn more because their teachers are using new or different vehicles of testing and reporting? Keeping these questions in the foreground might help program workers as they continually work on the dilemma of measuring learning in ways that keep everyone informed, funded, and most importantly, learning.

WEB RESOURCES OF INTEREST

Handouts for "How Do We Measure Progress in Adult ESL?" From an online discussion about adult education through the National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education (NCLE). **http://www.cal.org/discuss/adultesl/eslprog/handout1.htm**

Let's Get Started: An initial assessment pack for adult literacy programs. An on-line booklet of information intended to help a tutor get started with a new learner from Manitoba Education and Training. **http://www.nald.ca/clr/getstarted/cover.htm**

Portfolios in Practice. Andrea Leis with Rosemary Rognvaldson. On-line at: **http://www.nald.ca/clr/portfolio/cover.htm** Hard copies, complete with graphics not available on-line, can be purchased for $5.60 each from Conestoga College. Send a check made out to "Conestoga College" to: Bob McIver, Conestoga College, 435 King Street North Waterloo, Ontario CANADA N2J 2Z5 Phone: (519) 885-300 x241, FAX: (519) 747-1195 email: bmciver@conestogac.on.ca Manuals will be sent COLLECT via Purolator.

http://www.cal.org/ncle/agenda. Research agenda for Adult ESL, prepared by NCLE in collaboration with the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL) with support from Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc. (TESOL). The paper identifies issues recommended for further research and development in the field of adult ESL education.

http://www.brown.edu/departments/swearer_center/literary_resources/ Janet Isserlis' website.

☑

Reflections at the End of an ESL Day

by
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A day teaching English as a second language to adults is a day filled with constantly changing situations. I'm sure that we've all been in the classroom when an idea that was to be used as a 10 minute warm up, fill in or review ends up as an hour long activity, just as an involved series of tasks sometimes has to be cut short or even eliminated. Teaching instincts and our individual flexibility allow lots of changes to take place within the classroom, in a way that feels normal and natural. This in turn creates a relaxed and spontaneous atmosphere for learning to take place. Whether your lesson plans are formal and written down or simply stored in your head, and whether they are carried out in tact, or changed, it is always good planning to run a checklist at the end of the hour, lesson or day. This is in effect a self-evaluation, a reflection of what happened in your class and with your teaching. The checklist might look something like the following:

End of Class Reflection List

a) was the aim/goal of the lesson/activity achieved?

b) were the students happy, working and interested?

c) was I well prepared?

d) with hindsight, what would I do differently?

e) was I checking students' understanding throughout the activity?

f) did I use good correction techniques?

g) what techniques did I use to elicit answers, conversation from the students (also known as nomination techniques)?

Keeping this list at the front of your lesson planning book or at the back of your mind really serves as a good framework or reminder. It helps me keep an ongoing conversation with myself and also my class that feels somewhat organized, or structured in nature. It makes the next day's lesson planning more logical, more coherent to the previous day's because I'm able to draw from my analysis of my teaching, the students' behavior, learning, and understanding and build on what I have learned.

I focus on the last three points of the reflection list. They are, first of all, very much related; they work together in the process of this self evaluation. These three questions of checking understanding, using good correction techniques, and eliciting responses often help me to build relationships with my students and to plan ways to encourage the students' participation in class. The way we use these methods affects how we teach, our interaction with students, and how we plan activities and whole lessons. Ultimately they teach us how to do our jobs.

It is also important to remember that students need to understand what we are doing and to know what is expected of them. Our behavior, the techniques, and the methods we use must stimulate students, to provide a level of comfort and challenge at the same time. Students will become familiar with our methods, will pick up on what we are doing, and know what is expected of them when we are consistent with how we question, correct, or elicit. This is how we build relationships with our students.

One program I have been teaching in

recently — a year-round, five-day-a-week program — also has given me the luxury of time to try to learn from these ideas and to build these relationships. Too often though we teach in programs where the lesson time is short and infrequent, making the consistency of our methods of checking understanding, correcting and eliciting all the more important, being sure that we communicate our expectations clearly, and that we get feedback and participation from our students.

CHECKING UNDERSTANDING

It is important to be aware, using techniques I will discuss, of students' real understanding of a grammar point, new vocabulary, or simply the conversation going on in the classroom. It becomes much easier and more efficient to make a decision as to whether to continue, or whether to adapt or review the ongoing activity, lesson, or material being taught or being reinforced.

Checking understanding is one of the important parts of the reflection checklist that needs to happen throughout the lesson as well as at the end. The information you receive as a teacher affects how you teach in the future and what the next steps need to be. Although most of us do this anyway, it is important to revisit and review how and when we do so.

Some of the times when it is necessary to check understanding might be when:

1) you are presenting new language items.
2) a problem has arisen in the course of a lesson, or when you realize a student has not grasped something.
3) you are correcting student errors.
4) you are giving instructions.

HOW DO WE DO THIS?

The most common way is through questioning students on an ongoing basis. However, the question "Do you understand?" does not usually work for several reasons:

1) the student may actually think s/he understands, but doesn't.
2) s/he may not want to admit not understanding, perhaps for fear of losing face, taking time, or just fear of talking.
3) a student may not be clear what part of the lesson s/he is supposed to understand; the question itself is not clear.

Here is an example of using productive questioning to check understanding:

During a lesson about English idioms and expressions, paraphrase or simplify the expression you are teaching to see if students have understood it.

For instance, if you are teaching the expression 'it isn't necessary,' first change it to 'don't have to'.

Having simplified the expression, use that simplification to create an interactive dialogue between you and the class or student. Then pose the question to the class or student:

Teacher: "You *don't have to* bring a gift to a dinner party, do you?"

If the student has grasped what you are teaching, the answer will show the understanding.

Student: "No, you *don't* have to, the host *does not* expect it; it *isn't* necessary."

This tells you that the expression has truly been understood and that the student knows how to use it in conversation. If the response is not similar to this example, you now know to re-teach the lesson in another way.

Another way to use questioning effectively to check understanding, is to use a statement, followed by questions. For instance, if you are teaching a new vocabulary word like 'hesitated' , the dialogue might be:

Statement to student: "She hesitated before answering the question."

Question to student: "Did she answer the question?"

Student response: "Yes."

Question: "Did she answer it immediately?"

Student response: "No."

Question: "Did she wait for a moment before answering."

Student response: "Yes, she hesitated."

Again, an inappropriate answer will alert you to look back at the way you taught the lesson and adapt that method and then use questioning to check understanding again.

Other ways of checking understanding can include:

1) Explanations given by the students themselves, e.g. a student explains the word 'mortgage' by saying "you buy a house and write a check to the bank every month." True, but a limited statement. The teacher must then follow with questions to check that the other students also understand, for instance: " Who actually owns the house until the mortgage payments (monthly checks) are all paid?" or "How long do you have to send the checks? or " Are you buying your home if you pay rent?"

2) Using contrasts /oppositions e.g when learning adjectives, "What is the opposite of 'tall', or 'noisy'... ('acting out' adjectives helps a lot here too, particularly when the students are doing it too, perhaps turning the lesson onto a guessing game, charades....) or providing students with contrasting statements to define:

1. "I *really* don't like pizza"
2. "I *don't* really like pizza"

If the statements are understood, the students' definitions should make it apparent that the person in statement 1 feels much more strongly about not liking pizza than the person in 2.

3. Prompting: The teacher can provide prompt words to check that students can make meaning of a structure as in the following:

   Student: I *used to* smoke a lot

   Teacher: But .....?

   Student: But I don't now.

   This tells us that 'used to ' is understood to be in the past.

4. Translation is also an important tool in a monolingual situation. There are inherent dangers though: the first language can be too easily become the preferred method of communication, and there aren't always translation equivalents.

5. Using timelines, followed by questions, to check understanding of verb tenses. Students indicate on the line what statement suggests:

   Diagram on board:

   now

   ______________________x_

   I arrived - the train left

   Question: "Did the train leave before or after I arrived?"

   "Did I arrive before or after the train left?"

   Statement: " When I arrived, *the train left*."

or

now

______________________x_

When I arrived the train had left the
train left   I arrived

Use the same line of questioning for each tense you teach.

Be as thorough as possible without losing the students' interest. Checking can be oral, but using the blackboard provides a visual record of meaning.

A high level of understanding and learning depends to a large extent on the material being presented at the right level, and being well presented with activities designed to capture and keep a student's attention. It is also dependent on some other factors that were mentioned in the reflection list, namely correction and eliciting techniques.

CORRECTION TECHNIQUES

Given that the best learning usually takes place when students are involved and comfortable enough to speak out, when they are not afraid to make a mistake, an important goal is to decrease the teacher talking time (TTT) and increase student talking time (STT).

To do this, the ways we correct students become critical. We need to create situations, opportunities, and *time* for students not only to want to speak out but to want to correct themselves as often as possible and *feel proud* of doing so. There are strategies we can use to deal with errors in all respects including those that come up as a result of checking understanding and from what we hear when we use different nomination techniques.

The principle is simple. When a student makes an error in grammar or pronunciation and you feel it is necessary or appropriate to correct it right then, consider the following:

Student: "I can to swim."
Teacher: "I can…?" using questioning expression…encouraging hand signals… and *wait* for an alternate response.

This can be repeated more than once, or maybe opened up to the class to answer, having the original student repeat or just continue on, as you deem appropriate. Basically, the fewer words the teacher speaks, the better; simply repeat the sentence up to the point of error and wait.

We need to create situations, opportunities, and time for students not only to want to speak out but to want to correct themselves as often as possible.

If the teacher simply provides the answer, not only does less learning take place but you disallow the student's pleasure and pride of stating the correct answer. I believe that by correcting effectively, we can increase understanding dramatically.

There is, of course, always the question of *whether* to correct, and if so, whether to do so at the point of error, or later. Errors that should probably be corrected are those that interfere severely with communication between students or those that would make it difficult for students to understand the next phase of a lesson. If you realize, for instance, that a student has misconstrued a new vocabulary word such as 'consistent,' thinking it means 'disagreeable,' then your plan to use it in some free discussion will not be productive. It needs correction.

The next question is whether the whole class needs help or just one person, and then the best way to carry out the correction. To alleviate embarrassment for an individual, initially praise (it must have validity) the student for their good pronunciation, the good sentence they said prior to the error, or what is appropriate, and approach the error second. Give a sentence using 'consistent' correctly, and ask how it sounded, or throw the question of meaning out to the class to discuss, while

We have a responsibility to help students take a risk, to speak out and feel motivated. Should the class seem reticent in these situations however, the material may be too hard and need to be modified.

thanking the original student for their input. In other words, like in most situations related to work in the classroom, emphasize the positive and don't dwell on the negative. If students are reading, I try to interject the right pronunciation quietly and let them repeat it essentially without interruption. I find that other students do it anyway and in general it is non-threatening in a class where the atmosphere has been encouraged to be one of supporting, helping one another. The less anxiety the better!

NOMINATION TECHNIQUES

Just as checking understanding and effective correction techniques are skills to be learned, using various ways of nomination also require practice, and planning at first. Some techniques to try are:

1. *Eye contact*. This uses no language and so keeps distraction to a minimum.
2. *Random*. Keeps everyone awake because students cannot predict when they will be called on.
3. *In order*. Fair, predictable but can cause students to lose focus on work going on because they are so busy anticipating what they might have to answer.
4. *Free, volunteer*. Particularly good at point of lesson or free stage when real life situations are being acted out.

By *eye contact* I mean to catch a student's attention and silently communicate that you would like for them to respond. It should be non-threatening — no names are called out — but if it is clear that the student can't or won't answer, you can continue to another student or choose another technique to use. I like to use this a lot because it is quiet and my voice is not interrupting or distracting the ongoing work. It also gives choice to the students because they can avoid the teacher's eye if they want to. Instinct will tell you when to change, whether you feel it necessary to have someone participate or not. Random nomination can also work well when you need to keep a particular individual or group alert. In this method, you would call specific names of those you want to be involved. If you have students who are particularly shy or anxious, and you can tell them ahead that they just need to listen, that you won't call on them until they are ready. Their relief will allow them to learn much better!

Try to observe reactions. Are you keeping students alert without being nervous or anxious? Are they drifting, falling asleep? Is the pace of the class being slowed down or becoming too predictable? Are students waiting, hoping to participate? Be aware that nominating gives you, as teacher, control, e.g. "Maria, tell us..."

I find that it is good at times to have the students choose the next person, nominee. Think about how much control you want to be comfortable. Think too about what makes your class more comfortable. The random method can be very scary to a shy, nervous learner but success for that individual will build tremendous self confidence and serve too to encourage his/her classmates. We have a responsibility to help students take a risk, to speak out and feel motivated. Should the class seem reticent in these situations however, the material may be too hard and need to be modified. This is also an opportunity to check understanding during the activity, to support and encourage.

When we elicit answers *in order*, there may be two opposing reactions within your group of students. Some will enjoy knowing when they will be called on, and relax meantime. Others won't be able to relax because they will focus all their attention on their turn, and may lose out on learning.

A large class lends itself to *free, open* nomination, which can be freeing for all, releasing pressures sometimes felt in smaller classes. I have used this method with success in higher level classes, where there is often more confidence. Open the classroom floor to students, to allow those willing to answer freely. This often creates a noisy, stimulating atmosphere of ideas and thereby encourages those more reticent to participate. The teacher's role is then to be a moderator.

In general, we will select the methods best suited to our style of teaching, and to the make up of a class, but it can help us to expand students' learning if we are willing to try new ways of nomination. The goal is always to:

1. elicit answers.
2. encourage participation.
3. check understanding.
4. correct errors.
5. revise work.
6. give or keep control.

It is the role of a teacher to help motivate students to learn, to create the opportunities to learn, and to foster or provide a good atmosphere in which to do so. In order to ensure that learning does indeed take place. We have to be quite careful to monitor our own work, and be careful to take the guesswork out of our work. By checking understanding, by correcting and eliciting , we can actually see what is being learned as it happens, or at the end of the day when we are reflecting.

I would like to express my thanks to the students and teachers at Teacher Training International in London where I attended a TEFL course that taught me so much, in particular to understand and use some of the techniques and strategies I have discussed in this article.

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Assessment tools in the multi-level ESOL classroom

The More Things Change, the More They Seem to Stay the Same

by
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Last Fall I returned to the classroom for the first time in five years. My absence from the classroom correlates with my time in staff and program development, during which I undertook a different kind of teaching, that of presentations or trainings for my peers.

During that time I thought a lot about what constitutes good teaching and learning while observing and talking to teachers. The conversation had been getting a little too abstract for me, however, a bit too removed from what I had actually experienced in the classroom. So I chose as my own staff development project for the year to teach ESOL once a week at a small community-based organization near my home.

THE ENGLISH CLASS

"La clase de Inglés," as my students referred to the class, was entirely composed of women, mostly from the Dominican Republic. They averaged about eight per night, but always began at about 20 during the first weeks of each cycle. A wonderful thing about this class was that it offered childcare to each woman (or man) who came. The class was never designed to be just for women, but available, no-cost child care was definitely a big draw for the immigrant women who lived nearby.

A feature of the class that had attracted me initially also proved a challenge as time went on. The class was offered twice a week but the teaching was shared between me and another teacher. I taught one night and she taught the other, which worked wonderfully for our schedules, but made it challenging to plan classes together. We did meet regularly with the counselor, to talk about the students and to plan initial assessment at the beginning of each cycle.

INITIAL ASSESSMENT

The first planning session was at the ALRI library where I offered a sample of various assessment tools and past copies of *Adventures in Assessment*. I also had samples of tools I had used as an ESOL teacher, including one I had designed for an advanced class that never took place. This self-assessment was modeled on one developed by teachers at Read/Write/Now Adult Learning Center in Springfield, Massachusetts. I always liked how their assessment is based on principles of whole language and referred back to it several times over the years. It is not so much one tool, but a series of tools that are done over a whole cycle of classes. (You can find it and an accompanying article about it in *Adventure in Assessment*, Vol. 1.)

The version I developed focuses on a learner self assessment of the different ways s/he may be using English across the four major skill areas of comprehension, speaking, reading and writing *(see "ESOL Assessment" tool at the end of this article)*. The learner not only lists those areas in which s/he has difficulty, but also thinks about the ways in which s/he already knows and uses English.

In the first session, for example, the learner fills in the following sentence: *I* *understand English at (work, my children's school, health clinic, etc.)* by checking off one of four categories: *a little, some, a lot, need more."* The same is true for the skill areas of speaking, reading and writing. The student is then invited to look over what s/he has checked off and notice the different ways s/he may already understand, speak, read, and write English.

After the student has a sense of his/her areas of strength, then s/he chooses one area from each skill category to work on in class. For example, a student may choose to focus on "understanding English at church," "speaking at the children's school," "reading in English for a job application," "writing notes to teachers." The end goal is that the learner will come up with an individual plan for the class.

MIXED RESULTS

As I write this article and look over the assessment forms filled out by the learners, I realize that they did give us some of the information we wanted, such as literacy levels and a broad survey of the learners' use and understanding of the English language. Yet I was disappointed because it failed to give us and the learners, clear and definitive information.

First, the design of the tool is a bit unwieldy: it's too long and has too many crooked lines for the learners to navigate easily. Second, even though I explained each category in Spanish and invited the women to answer in Spanish, it was still difficult for the learners to understand how the form was organized. It is somewhat artificial to separate listening and speaking skills, especially for beginning students. It was even more difficult to differentiate between "a little," "some," "a lot," and "need more." As an ESOL teacher, I usually don't get into adverbs of frequency until well into a cycle and normally not with absolute beginners. The difficulty in this case was compounded by the fact that "poquito" and "algo" ("a little" and "some," respectively) mean the same thing in Spanish.

Clearly, this tool would work better with more advanced learners, for whom I had designed it in the first place. Even with an advanced group, though, there needs to be plenty of time allotted for learners to fill it out, ideally with the help of more than just one teacher. The learners need someone to walk them through the instrument and to talk to them about what they check off and why.

My co-teacher and I still used the results of this initial assessment tool to learn about each student's literacy levels as well as to get a general idea about which topics learners were interested in. For the end-of-cycle evaluation, however, I wanted a tool that would be more interactive and dynamic, something that would jog people's memory about what had actually taken place in my Monday class.

END OF FIRST CYCLE EVALUATION

On newsprint paper, I wrote the theme for each class next to the date it occurred. Samples of the lesson were stapled on the left hand side. Each student was given five stars to place next to their favorite lessons. I left space on the right hand side for written comments which they could write in Spanish if they wanted. Once I explained the process and gave them their stars, I left the room for as long as they needed.

The women liked the task and gave me some predictable as well as unpredictable comments. For example, they rated highly a couple of lessons that I thought had

Clearly, doing the evaluation had given the learners the space and perhaps even the confidence of telling me what they needed to learn better.

bombed. They also wrote some positive comments about me as the teacher, which is typical of many ESOL classes, but those comments were also peppered with some positive criticism, such as "I would like for the next class to start like if we were kids, starting with simpler sentences, at a lower level."

When I asked for clarification of their comments, a couple of learners told me I had gone a bit too fast for them, that I erased things too quickly from the board, and that they wanted more traditional types of lessons. Clearly, doing the evaluation had given the learners the space and perhaps even the confidence of telling me what they needed to learn better. The ultimate, albeit small sign of their progress was the one comment actually written in English: "I liked is (sic) class because, se compartia (we shared)…"

SECOND CYCLE

For the initial assessment of the second cycle, we decided to totally change gears from what we had done in the first cycle. This time we decided to separate the assessment into three distinct parts: the intake (with the personal information), the literacy, and the goal setting. For the first two parts we used an assessment tool developed by the state of New York for use in their adult basic education ESOL classes. It comes in various languages and tests literacy through a series of short readings in English at various levels. After reading them, learners are encouraged to write a short paragraph about themselves. Unfortunately, doing the personal piece and the goal setting (more about that later) took all of the first day, and the following class was cancelled due to a holiday. We lost momentum and never went back to the reading piece.

We did get a small flavor of what it would be like to do the entire assessment from one learner who had done the Spanish version. She actually wrote an entire paragraph where she revealed she only had a second grade education (she had left that question blank in the first part of the assessment). She wrote:

"si llo quiero aprender por que me es mui dificil cuando sargo a buscar trabajo. cuando voi a los apoime que tengo que usar una tercera persona isi no aparese interprete. me sucedio unabes, tube tres hora es perando por un interprete. me asido dificil por mi nibel de estudio segundo de primaria gracia"

("yes, I want to learn because it has been very hard when I go looking for work. When I go to "apoime" (appointment) I have to use a third person if there is no translator. It happened that one time I was three hours waiting for an interpreter. It has been hard because my level of studies is second grade primary. Thank you.)

In this one example, we can see how the tool is meant to work from soliciting personal data to actually gauging reading and writing levels.

BREAKING THE ICE, SETTING GOALS

For the goal setting, I decided to do a variation on a "breaking the ice" group activity Elsa Auerbach used a long time ago and which I have used many times since. The learners split into two lines facing each other. I brought in my tape recorder with contemporary African music and told the students they had to walk or dance moving to their left until I stopped the music. Then, and only then, could they stop and face the person in front of them. They had to interview the other student and ask them their name, their hometown (since most were from the Dominican Republic), how many years they were in this country, and why they wanted to learn English. I told them to pay special attention to the latter question since they would be asked to introduce me to one other person at the end of the activity. It was a lot of fun to see the women dancing, including the grandmothers, to the beat of the infectious African beat. I let it go on for a couple of rounds and when we stopped, I asked each learner to introduce me to one of the people they had talked to and tell me why they wanted to learn English.

As each woman introduced another, I wrote what each said on newsprint. We went over it the next class, adding the voices of those who had not been present. I then asked the learners to look for common themes or goals in the list of reasons why they wanted to learn English. It took us a while to make the distinction between general goals like "I want to learn English because I like it," to more concrete goals like "I need English when I go to the doctor." We came up with a short list that included doctors, children's schools, work, shopping, and citizenship tests. The group finally decided to start with doctors as a class topic for that cycle.

CYCLE EVALUATION

The last day of the cycle was suddenly upon us and the agency organized a celebration to which members of the Board of Directors were invited. I had to design something that could be completed in fifteen minutes or less, so I asked myself what did I really want to know? What questions would give me the bare bones of information I needed to evaluate the class and plan for the next cycle? The questions also had to be as simple and direct as possible to minimize the amount of explaining I would have to do. The following questions, typed out in big print on a single sheet, fulfilled those requirements with fairly good results:

1) This cycle I learned:

2) I used my English at:

3) Next cycle I want to learn about:

4) The teachers help me to learn when they:

5) The teachers do not help me to learn when they:

For the first question, I asked them to be as specific as they could, encouraging them to write down anything at all that they remembered from the class. Many wrote the parts of the body we had been learning and showed themselves in a very tangible way that indeed they had "learned something." I was hoping for the same degree of specificity in the second question, "I used my English at..." but it was too hard for most to go beyond a list of "work, bus, etc. "I tried to get verbal anecdotes from some as I went around. One woman wrote "may (sic) house" as a place where she had used her English. Since I knew she had children, I kidded her by saying, "Oh, Alba, you are now talking to your kids in English." "No, with my neighbor," she replied, then told me how she translated a letter from the clinic to her neighbor and felt that she had been able to do so because of the health theme in our classes. This is the kind of detail I wanted but which is hard to get from a written evaluation unless you ask the "right" question and have the time to prod.

Question #3 was also helpful in giving us information about the next cyle but #4, "The teachers help me to learn when they..." was a mixed bag and #5 did not

I had to design something that could be completed in fifteen minutes or less, so I asked myself what did I really want to know?

work at all. I speculate that either it was too close to #4 (the same words, except for "do not") or it would have meant being critical of the teachers, which adult learners usually don't like to do. Even after explaining the question in Spanish, most wrote variations on "my teachers are good" and a couple showed that they had not undestood the question at all. Overall, I liked the simplicity of this form but would have liked more time to really get into the questions with the students and try to get them to give me (and themselves) as much information as possible.

I developed an even simpler final evaluation tool for the end of the third cycle. We simply asked the students what they liked most about the class and what they had not liked and any recommendations for a future class. We got much more direct information such as recommendations to use the book in class (we had picked a self-study text of English for Spanish speakers) to the by then ubiquitous "don't erase so fast."

THIRD CYCLE

Simplicity and speed were the motivating factors for the short third cycle. Because we already had information about returning students, I had come up with a "test" that included materials from the last cycle, mainly in response to the women's request for more traditional exercises such as dictation and quizzes. It worked very well because it provided a sense of continuity for those who had been coming most of the year and it was in an assessment format that felt familiar to them. For me, the teacher, it was also a familiar way in which to assess how folks had progressed and whether they had engaged with the material.

THE "JOHN'S TEST"

I chose the true-and-tried "John's test" for the initial evaluation of new learners because we needed a tool that would give us the maximum amount of information in the quickest amount of time. There were only two of us to assess 20 people, half of whom were brand new. My co-teacher took over the assessment of returning learners, while I met with the new learners, which included two young men. We only had about two hours in which to do it all and the John's test was perfect for that kind of situation. I could conduct the oral proficiency piece, for example, while one student was filling out the intake piece and another could be finishing Part II, the literacy screening.

The John's test, as many teachers of ESOL to adults know, was widely used in programs until fairly recently. It was one of the first tests (1975) originally designed to test English oral proficiency in adults at basic education programs. It was also not copyrighted which further encouraged its use but mostly, it is a quick, easy-to-use tool that concentrates on testing listening and speaking skills. Through the years, teachers have adapted it, mostly to include a reading/writing component.

The version I used is so changed that it hardly can be called the John's test. For one thing, "John" is gone. In the original version, a series of seven pictures showed a day in the life of John. Learners were expected to try to describe what was happening with John in those pictures. At the Boston Workplace Collaborative, where I first taught ESOL, we got rid of John and used the personal data questions as a "test" of oral profiency. A "0" indicated no comprehension, while a "3" indicated an advanced level. A two-part literacy screening followed that goes from very simple matching of words to pictures of common, everyday things like "fire," "house," etc., to more advanced tasks of reading a short letter and answering comprehension questions.

It had been many years since I had last used it, but I found it worked fairly well in answering the kinds of questions we had about a brand new learner. Could they understand and answer simple, personal questions such as "what is your name, how many years of formal schooling have you had in your country, can you read or write at all, can you read in English at all?

It also helped us deal with our biggest challenge, which was to assess folks as quickly as possible. Like most assessment tools, it was less effective in giving us accurate levels of people's knowledge and skills but it did give us elementary knowledge about each student.

THE LESSON IN ALL THIS?

This is the question I always ask myself after I've been faced with a challenge where I have had to reevaluate assumptions and change a course of action. I think the biggest realization for me after this experience, and which I had forgotten in my years out of the classroom, was how time-consuming assessment is. It was the biggest factor in my decision to go from using a "cadillac" of a tool to a true-and-tried placement test. Ideally, initial assessment should be done at a special time with up to thirty minutes allotted per learner, so there is enough time at the end for the teacher or counselor to talk to the student about the process.

A casualty of the time crunch is ongoing assessment. There simply wasn't enough time in our three cycles to include a formal assessment even though there were a couple of quizzes and frequent checking in between my co-teacher, the counselor, and me. For the most part those conversations tended to focus on other basic needs our students had, many of whom were facing cuts in social welfare benefits such as food stamps. This was especially disturbing for us when we realized that for at least one mother, the snack we gave to her kids during childcare was her biggest incentive for attending class.

A colleague asked me why I tried different tools instead of sticking with one throughout the year to see how it worked with different learners. It struck me that I had not even considered that option, which is a good one given that in my experience, every learner and situation in ESOL is different. I believe my motivation for changing tools was simply the need to find one that fit certain criteria that were not very clear at the beginning but which evolved as the year went by.

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Through this experience I have come to believe that developing criteria for assessment should not only include standards for measuring skills and levels but other factors as well, such as composition of the class, frequency of meetings and length of cycles, and ultimately, what really makes sense to do. I had started out by being overly concerned with assessing people's skill levels in English and getting a picture of literacy in their lives. Those were good goals but I needed to start with some simple, basic questions such as, what do we really need to know about a new student when they walk through the door, how can we assess returning students (especially when there are no other levels), what is realistic given the time available for the assessment as well as the class itself, what can we find out about a previous class to inform the next one, what do learners want to learn.

Ultimately, I don't believe any one language assessment tool can give us the whole picture of a learner. At best, an initial assessment tool can give the teacher a snapshot of the student and the final evaluation is the end result of an ongoing conversation about what is going on in class, what needs to be better, and what the learner's needs are. Getting answers to some of these questions became more important to me than the exact tool I was using.

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ESOL ASSESSMENT TOOL

Name____

Address____

Phone____

Country of Origin____________________ **Years in the U.S.**______

Did you go to school in your country? How many years?

Did you like school in your country? Why or why not?

Have you studied English before? Where?

Why are you interested in this class?

SELF ASSESSMENT TOOL

I understand English at:	**a little**	**some**	**a lot**	**need more**
work				
my children's school				
the health clinic				
church				
the supermarket				
the clothing store				
the shoe store				
my school				
parties				
immigration office				
unemployment office				
buses/train				
television				
radio				
community meetings				

I speak English at:	**a little**	**some**	**a lot**	**need more**
work				
my children's school				
the health clinic				
church				
stores				
my school				
the police				
utility company (gas, electricity, phone, cable TV				
immigration office				
unemployment office				
buses/train				
community meetings				
Other				

Modeled after ReadWriteNow (AiA, Volume 1)

Look at the different ways you may be reading and writing in English

I can read in English:	a little	some	a lot	need more
name and address				
telephone numbers				
instructions for medicine				
magazines				
newspapers				
TV guide				
notes from children's school				
job announcements				
bills				
instructions at work				
job/credit application				
bank slips				
children's books				
Bible/religious books				
ads for apartments				
letters				
signs in the stores				
papers from immigration				
notice about community events				
local newspaper				
comic books				
other				

I can write in English:	a little	some	a lot	need more
name and address				
job application				
credit application				
letters				
notes to my kids' teachers				
poems				
stories				
other: (please list)				

Do you like to read and write in your native language?

If you do, what do you read and write?

- ☐ letters
- ☐ newspapers
- ☐ magazines
- ☐ Bible/religious books
- ☐ romances
- ☐ novels
- ☐ comic books
- ☐ detective stories
- ☐ photonovelas
- ☐ other

Do you speak to your children in your native language?

Look over your list for a few minutes and notice the different ways that you already may understand, speak, read and write English, even if it is just a little bit. Are there any surprises?

Now look over the right column where you need more help. Choose one (1) area from each category. Example:

I want to understand English at the community meetings.
I want to speak English at my children's school.
I want to read in English a job application.
I want to write in English notes to my kids' teachers.

Now try it for yourself.

I want to understand English ____________________
I want to speak English ____________________
I want to read in English ____________________
I want to write in English ____________________

These are my personal goals for this class.

ENGLISH CLASS CYCLE EVALUATION

This cycle I learned:

I used English at:

Next cycle I want to learn about:

The teachers help me to learn when they:

The teachers do not help me to learn when they:

Is On-Going Assessment Fully Learner-Centered?

by
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During 1997/1998, I was a member of the group that developed the Framework for Adult ESOL in Massachusetts. One of the cross-cutting themes in that document is assessment. I had volunteered to examine and write something up on assessment for the draft.

Working alone and with few guidelines to follow, I decided that a useful resource to aid me in my task would be the *Adventures in Assessment* series. Since the articles had been written by practitioners from around the state, I thought I would get a good sampling of what is being done in ESOL assessment in a variety of programs. I could use that information, along with my own experiences with assessment in 20 years of teaching ESOL, to write a piece on assessment.

Since there are standardized and program-designed tests for initial and exit testing, I chose on-going assessment as the main focus of my piece. At that time I chose to outline the various forms of on-going assessment, give some examples, and stress the efforts of practitioners to make on-going assessment student-centered.

In this journal, I further explore on-going assessment and what I learned from reading all the ESOL articles in prior volumes of *Adventures in Assessment*.

MY PREVIOUS UNDERSTANDING OF ON-GOING ASSESSMENT

Before reading all of the articles in Adventures in Assessment, I had defined on-going assessment as examining and documenting learner progress at certain intervals in the learning process. In the program I teach in at Quinsigamond Community College, we had designed two assessment forms for on-going assessment (see 'Bringing Learners into Goal-Setting,' Burke, Gosselin, and Shea, Vol. 8). One form is for students to reflect and comment on their own progress. The other form is for the teacher to comment on each learner's progress. We have also used portfolios — usually folders of samples of a learner's work and copies of the above mentioned assessment forms — which were to document the learner's progress. This documentation has been used to assist us in judging when a learner is ready to move on to the next level class and to provide the teacher of the next level with a record of the learner's work.

A NEW UNDERSTANDING OF ON-GOING ASSESSMENT

Many articles in the assessment journals defined on-going assessment in a way similar to my definition above. But there were also articles that defined on-going assessment as evaluation of the class and activities taking place in class. The assessment tools mentioned in these articles ask students to assess class activities as to whether the students enjoyed them and whether the activities were of value to the students in helping them to make progress.

Like any good instructor, I want to be responsive to the needs of my learners. So I often ask for feedback from my students about activities we are doing, especially if the activities are new ones for the class.

Also, I have always tried to encourage my students to speak up if they feel something is not helpful or if they want the class to change in some way. But I never thought of having a more formal assessment tool of class activities for students to complete as described in some of the articles I had read.

Some practitioners talked about using 'oral feedback' to ask students how they feel about the class. Caroline Gear (Vol . 8, p. 46) states:

> *"Asking learners about their progress and satisfaction with the program enables learners to begin thinking about how they learn and what works best for them."*

Some instructors, including Gear, record a learner-generated list of activities on the board or on a form and the students are asked to rank them numerically or with a happy, neutral, or unhappy face, according to their enjoyment of each activity. Other articles talked about having learners keep a weekly log and write how they felt about class activities done in the week.

By doing this type of assessment, learners can identify which activities they like and which ones they find helpful to their learning. It provides an instructor with some documentation of learner preferences.

Both types of on-going assessment above are vital to an effective ESOL classroom. They inform instructors which activities their learners find most helpful and allow instructors to plan lessons accordingly. It also provides a record of progress.

REFLECTIONS ON LEARNER-CENTERED ASSESSMENT

A common theme throughout this journal series has been learner-centered assessment. Looking at the two types of on-going assessment I mentioned above, I wondered how much they include learners in the process and at what point in the process.

I reviewed everything that had been written in past issues on student involvement in on-going assessment. In Volume 1, learner-centered assessment was defined as "a collaborative relationship among learners and program staff in determining the goals, texts, and contexts of assessment, as well as judging its outcomes" (p. ii).

If I interpret this quote correctly, it means that learners should be involved in the entire planning process of the purpose and form of on-going assessment. Learners should be full partners in deciding the goals of on-going assessment. They should be involved in deciding how and when progress will be measured. They should take part in deciding which class activities will be most helpful to their progress.

In examining my own on-going assessment practices, I can see changes that I can make so that my students have greater ownership of the process. For example, at the beginning of a school year, I can generate a list of common class activities in collaboration with my students. My students can tell me which ones they prefer. Such a list might include such things as dictation, being read aloud to, doing small group work, watching a video, and taking field trips. Using the input I receive from my students, I can plan my lessons to include the preferred activities.

At regular intervals, the students could assess the activities as to whether they have been helpful to the students' progress. Changes in activities could be made where desired or deemed necessary.

I could also conduct a learning-style inventory with my students to help them understand which types of activities would be better for them, based on their predominant learning style. Such an activity would help them understand why they

Students could choose the on-going assessment tools we will use to document progress. At the end of a cycle, they could evaluate whether the tools we used really reflected the progress they thought they made.

seem to prefer certain class activities over others.

Also, the students and I could discuss their goals for a certain period of class time and collaboratively decide how and how often we will document on-going learner progress (keeping in mind any program requirements).

Rather than have the students simply fill out a self-assessment tool and call it learner-centered, students could choose the on-going assessment tools we will use to document progress. At the end of a cycle, they could evaluate whether the tools we used really reflected the progress they thought they made. If the students do not feel comfortable thinking up ways to document progress, I could show them commonly used samples of on-going assessment tools and they could choose the ones they think will be most effective.

CONCLUSION

The sub-title of this journal is "Learner-Centered Approaches to Assessment and Evaluation in Adult Literacy." That is what we as teachers have been striving for in using and contributing to this journal. We must continue to examine our own on-going assessment practices and ask ourselves some pertinent questions. How much do we really involve our learners in the assessment process? At what point in the process do we include our learners? Is the degree of learner involvement in on-going assessment in our programs enough? Are there ways we can provide our learners with greater ownership in the process of choosing and designing on-going assessment tools?

In Volume 2, p. iv, Loren McGrail stated, *"If all we do is substitute new multiple measures for old standardized measurements and monitor student progress for diagnostic purposes in terms of identifying strengths and weaknesses…, we will not have created a new paradigm. If, on the other hand, we include learners as active participants at the center of the process of measurement, as 'co-investigators' in determining their own literacy practices, strengths and strategies (Lytle, 1998), then we have truly engaged in alternative assessment."*

In reading through all the volumes of *Adventures in Assessment*, I can see our process of growth and change in assessment and clearly see that we have come a long way in improving on-going assessment so that it is more meaningful to learners and teachers and provides for greater learner participation. We have learned a lot from our fellow practitioners who have experimented in their classrooms and who have been generous enough to share their successes and failures so that we could learn from them and grow in the process too.

We need to continue to examine how we can include our students as full partners in on-going assessment at all stages in the process. Then we can fulfill the goal that Loren McGrail set for assessment in adult education in Massachusetts: learner-centered on-going assessment.

In the introduction to Volume 10, p. 4, Alison Simmons wrote, "There is not a clear, bright light at the end of the assessment tunnel that will resolve all the many dimensions of assessment that are inherent in our classrooms and programs."

What she says is very true, but in sharing with each other in this unique journal, we can help light the way as we navigate through this on-going assessment tunnel. In doing so, we can guide each other in improving our on-going assessment practices and make on-going assessment more learner-centered.

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Assessment and Accountability
A Modest Proposal

by
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At times it seems that everything there is to say about testing and assessment in adult literacy has been said. By now, practitioners and administrators alike can cite the shortcomings of standardized tests using multiple choice formats and are familiar with the inadequacy of grade levels as indicators of what adult learners know and are able to do .

Yet, pencil and paper, multiple-choice tests continue to be used not only as placement instruments but as measures of learner gains and evidence of program success. Given current reporting requirements, their use is likely to increase, at least in the near future.

From the perspective of programs, there seem few viable alternatives that would meet the information needs of funders interested in reliable data that indicate how a program is doing overall. Portfolio approaches, for example — considered the last great hope a few years back — have not quite matured to the level where they might be used as a means to report and aggregate learner gains by group (although they are invaluable as evidence of individual learner progress), largely because the field has not invested in the development of benchmarks and rubrics.

Local approaches have remained just that, local approaches, primarily for two reasons: 1) there has not been enough field testing to establish the reliability of these measures and 2) there have not been sufficient efforts to implement alternative assessments across programs. At this time, it is easy to see how even programs that have been enthusiastic about developing an assessment system that captures what they consider worthwhile outcomes are becoming distressed about the prospects of an alternative system being able to rival the standardized tests currently in fashion.

ALL IS NOT LOST

Yet, the picture is not as dim and grim as it might first appear. Indeed, it may be premature to give in to cynicism ("it's all a sham and no one really cares"), paranoia ("next year, all funding will be tied to the results of standardized tests"), and paralysis ("in the end, no one will care about alternative assessment, so let's just sit and wait to see what comes down the pike"). Since a Pollyanna attitude does not appear to be justified either, given recent legislation, perhaps it is time to take an existentialist perspective where we commit ourselves to forge ahead although (and even because) life in adult literacy does not always make sense, but what else are we going to do to stay sane?

Let's ask then if there is anything positive happening in assessment, and how we can help shape new directions on the national or state level, while continuing to strive for sane assessments within and across local programs.

THE FEDERAL OUTCOME REPORTING SYSTEM

You may have heard that the U.S. Department of Education has mandated a uniform outcome-based reporting system that requires that all states send data for all programs funded under Adult Basic Education (ABE) to the Department of Education in Washington. Assessments for capturing outcomes must be "valid and reliable." In other words, they must either be in the form of a standardized test (considered reliable by definition) or by some other means that meet these requirements. States (and the programs they fund) will be asked to report "learner gains" in reading, writing, speaking, and listening (and possibly additional skills related to workforce development) and show that learners are advancing across levels, such as the Student Performance Levels (SPL) established for ESL. These are minimal requirements and individual states can define progress in various ways or even suggest additional outcomes as evidence of literacy progress and program success.

To understand the thinking behind the initiative, it is important to keep in mind that the primary focus is neither curriculum reform, nor program improvement (although new assessment systems are often used for these purposes), but rather an accountability measure to bring adult literacy in line with the requirements of GPRA — the Government Performance and Results Act. GPRA requires that all federal agencies have to show that they, as well as the agencies and programs they fund, are achieving results or else risk loss of funding. Since the focus of GPRA is on the performance of the overall system (made up of thousands of programs), neither the federal government nor the states are likely to pay a great deal of attention to the progress made by any given learner at any given site, although site performance will be open for review (think standardized testing in K-12). Rather, funders will want to know how a program is doing overall (that is, whether it is positively affecting literacy skills), and they expect to see numbers in aggregate (summarized) form.

While in many ways, documenting the kinds of outcomes required by the new reporting system are "doable" (at least for programs that have long reported literacy gains for a sample of their students), two dangers loom as programs try to show gains for all students (not just a sample) and as results are increasingly tied to funding. There is a risk that programs will be a) tempted to manipulate assessment results in their favor and b) succumb to a practice known as "creaming".

MANIPULATING ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Any time success (and subsequent funding) is determined by the data a program reports, there are concerns about administrators "fudging the data." For example, programs have long known that the trick to increasing test scores is to NOT prepare students for the test, but rather to assess them as soon as they walk in the door. This keeps baseline scores artificially low and progress is inflated, since gains are due to increases in test-wiseness, rather than any real gains in literacy skills. Although this kind of manipulation is considered unethical, since the resulting data "lack integrity". The practice is nevertheless quite commonplace among programs pressured to demonstrate learner progress in short amounts of time.

(Clearly, this trick only works once for each set of students, since the effects tend to level off after subsequent administrations of the test).

THE DANGERS OF CREAMING

It is an unfortunate fact of adult literacy that programs that help those "hardest to serve" (for example, learners who are both new to English and new to literacy) have the greatest difficulties showing gains, not only because their learners need a great deal of time until progress is evident, but because the kind of progress they are making is not easily captured by standardized multiple choice, paper and pencil tests. In addition, programs who serve these students (often community-based organizations) don't have the resources to set up testing alternatives appropriate for a low literacy population.

There is a danger, then, that programs not fully committed to serving learners who need both special support and extended time will decide to focus their efforts instead on those students who most easily advance, since the incremental progress of "slower" students only makes the program "look bad."

Thinking along those lines, ESL programs, for example, might decide to focus the curriculum on immigrants with higher levels of education, rather than serving ESL literacy students.

This process of focusing on participants who are easy to serve is known as "creaming" and has long been decried as an unintended outcome of programs that have signed performance-based contracts (where funds are linked to learner outcomes and program impacts, such as job placement).

So far, not many public debates have taken place around this issue in adult literacy on the state level, but concerns are sure to arise as programs realize the difficulties they face in reporting progress across levels in the time periods envisioned by the reporting system.

SO WHY NOT ASK FOR AN EXEMPTION?

Two solutions to the problem of creaming seem possible: 1) set aside monies so that programs can develop an alternative assessment for lower level students or 2) ask that learners who have difficulty negotiating paper and pencil tests be exempted from testing. In my view, exemptions, as attractive as they may seems, are not the best solution in the long run, since we may end up marginalizing both this group and programs that serve them. As ESL programs in K-12 have seen, being exempt from accountability requirements is not the blessing that it might seem. As a rule, if certain types of learners are excused from testing, they tend to disappear from the radar screen of administrators and are ignored when program decisions are being made. Furthermore, it is difficult to ask for funding for a population for whom no data is available.

I believe that, rather than asking for exemptions for students who cannot cope with the standardized tests approved by a state, we are better off advocating for the development of an alternative assessment framework for this group. There is an additional advantage to advocating for resources to develop an alternative assessment for those new to literacy. Once such an assessment is developed for one group, it is easier to acquire the resources to extend it to other levels and other populations.

ALTERNATIVE TESTING FOR LOW LITERATE STUDENTS

What might an assessment that measures the incremental changes that occur at the initial levels of language and literacy development look like?

It is entirely possible to design a framework that allows learners to demonstrate what they can say and understand in English despite limited proficiency (in fact the oral interview component of the BEST test does just that). It is also possible to design a "can-do" literacy assessment (of the type first suggested by Lytle and Wolfe) based on the kinds of texts and tasks that those new to literacy deal with every day. For example, tasks could be designed that allow learners to select pieces of print that they can recognize fairly easily, along with those that give them some difficulty and others that pose a still greater challenge (e.g., McDonald's logos, sale signs, 50% off promotions, their own street address, a letter from the INS or the TANF office). After selecting these print pieces, learners would read the items once together with the friendly teacher/facilitator/assessor and would then try a few text pieces that they have selected on their own.

If a program wants to create an assessment that works double duty (as a basis for program improvement and for accountability), a further step is necessary: the development of scales, rubrics, and benchmarks that indicate the expectations for any given level and to what degree learners are close to acquiring the kind of knowledge, skills, and strategies that are a core part of our curriculum.

The assessor rates individual performance on a scale without making a big deal of it. On the third round, the assessor might select an item that is slightly more difficult than the previous one, again encouraging the person to discuss the item and interpret what it says. Through assessments of this sort, we should be able to tell to what extent learners can handle a variety of literacy task at varying levels of confidence and proficiency. It would help us to see evidence of skills worth having, such as: 1) telling an electricity bill from a phone bill or a notice from the INS from a notice from school, 2) recognizing certain types of applications (housing, employment; citizenship), 3) interpreting real life environmental print (reading stop or danger signs), or 4) writing a note to a repair person, the landlord, or the worker on the next shift.

Asking learners to select tasks that they can do with confidence as a starting point for assessment and then moving up from there is not limited to the domains of practical literacy. For those interested in basic skills acquisition that focus on the subtasks of reading, one-on-one student-initiated assessment can tell us to what extent learners have developed the kind of "phonemic awareness" that allows them to select familiar words that start with the same consonant or identify words that rhyme. Those interested in basic writing proficiency can ask learners to select an evocative photograph or some other prompt, discuss it with the facilitator and then write the response.

Such an assessment plus conversation model can also provide baseline data on literacy practices, documenting the kind of print task that learners engage in (looking at *TV Guide*; reading the Bible; checking the horoscope or soccer scores (in English or in a native language newspaper) and recording how these practices change over time.

Assessments that allow learners to select a simple task and then branch out is hardly a new concept. In fact, it is the basis for the kind of "adaptive" assessment that has been used in computer-based testing. True this this type of assessment requires one-on-one administration, but as practices in K-12 have shown, after the initial intake assessment has been completed, teachers can take out a few minutes with each student during class time over the course of three weeks or so to document what learners can do that they could not do before (trained facilitators could do short "pull out" sessions as well). As funding for adult literacy is increasing, the old refrain of "there is no money to do this" no longer holds true. There are alternatives to multiple choice tests and we must advocate for their development and their use if we are serious about documenting progress for all learners, including those who still struggle with basic literacy.

BUILDING AN ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK THAT YIELDS WORTHWHILE RESULTS

Developing an assessment that captures gains at the lower levels is only the starting point in a larger effort to build a system that works.

Other efforts are needed, at both the local and the state levels so that we don't end up with an accountability system that is driven in large part by what current standardized tests are able to measure. If we want the quality of adult literacy to increase, we need an approach that measures to what extent learners are acquiring the knowledge, skills, and strategies that matter in the long run. These might include generative skills, such as gaining meaning from various print sources important to one's life; communicating one's thoughts and ideas; learning how to learn; knowing about and using resources effectively; and learning with and from others (along with the sub skills that help learners become increasingly more proficient in these areas).

How can this be done? At the local level, a three-pronged approach might be necessary: 1) finding a way to live with the currently available standardized tests, selecting the "LOT" — the least objectionable test — and keeping in mind the principle of "first, do no harm" to students; 2) convincing the state that the data a program has provided over the years are at least as valid and reliable as standardized tests such as the TABE and therefore the process should continue and 3) work with others to develop an assessment system that reflects the realities of adult learners' lives and focuses on what participating programs have deemed to be the core sets of knowledge, skills, and strategies important enough to teach and test.

COMPONENTS OF AN ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

Profiles and Portfolios

What might be the components of such a system? To start with, any program concerned about serving different groups of learners equally well, needs to collect demographic information that captures the kind of learner characteristics and experiences that may have a bearing on school success.

After all, only by having rich descriptive information can we know what learners want and need to do with English and literacy (given their current circumstances and their goals for the future), how much schooling they have had (and how successful they were), and what the print and communication challenges are that they face in their everyday lives. Having descriptive information of this kind is invaluable since it allows us to see which learners are succeeding in our programs and which are languishing (or leaving) because their needs are not met.

This information can be collected in the form of profiles that travel with the student and to which teachers and learners contribute on an ongoing basis. In addition to background variables such as age, employment status, years of schooling, country of origin and languages spoken, these profiles can 1) capture current literacy practices (who is now speaking to the doctor without a translator; who has started to pick up a newspaper to check the weather); 2) chart shifts in learner goals and 3) record changes in life circumstances (new job, citizenship; economic self-sufficiency) important to stakeholders.

In these profiles, progress can be captured as it occurs (requiring only a line or two for two or three students per class). Profiles have the added advantage of encouraging teachers to create opportunities for learners to discuss what is happening in their lives, so they can spend some time observing. Profiles of this sort (also known as "running records") can be connected with portfolios that demonstrate student progress through writing samples, reading inventories, and various types of performance tasks.

If a standardized test is used, results can be included in the profile as well, helping to flesh out the general picture of achievements and struggles.

FROM LEARNER SUCCESS TO ACCOUNTABILITY

This must be said: While an approach that combines rich profiles and individual portfolios will produce important information on individual students and provide insights into the relative success of certain learner groups, it does not, in and of itself, yield the kind of data needed for accountability. After all, we cannot ship boxes of profile folders to funders to have them realize what a great job we are doing.

To make profiles work for funders, a further step is needed, one that yields data in aggregate form so that policymakers can get a picture of the shape and size of the forest, not just a close-up of the trees.

To measure progress and report to funders who is getting better at what, profiles need to include the following: a broad set of language and literacy tasks that are accompanied by rubrics, scales, and benchmarks for transition.

Rubrics are used to indicate what expectations are for any given area (face-to-face communication, dealing with print, accessing resources etc) and what evidence of success might look like. The scales that accompany the rubrics allow us to document where learners fall on a continuum of proficiency, documenting what they can do with relative ease, where they succeed with some help, and where they are struggling.

Since rubrics and scales can be designed for different skill domains (SCANS skills, communication strategies, navigating systems, civic involvement, learning how to learn, empowerment, etc) and for various contexts (school, family, community), they can easily be matched to the goals of learners and adapted to the focus of particular program. They also allow for the kind of student control in task selection discussed above.

Once rubrics and scales are in place, meeting accountability requirements that call for aggregate data becomes relatively easy. Since the descriptors on a scale can easily be numbered (from 1 for "struggles" to 6 for "no problem", say), assessment results can be easily compiled, summarized, analyzed and reported out. If matched with demographic profiles, they allow a program to see which groups of learners are being served well by the program and where program changes are in order because success is lacking.

The beauty is that this kind of approach fulfills the same function as standardized test: learners are assessed on a variety of skills under standard conditions with common instruments on similar tasks (yet given choices in task selection and afforded multiple opportunities to shine on tasks that matter in a given context important to learners). But unlike the standardized tests currently available, profile assessments do not rely on multiple choice, paper and pencil items.

Rather they give learners the opportunity to demonstrate what they can do with language and literacy through more open ended assignments. Furthermore, profile approaches to assessment can be adapted for certain learner groups and modified to match the focus of a particular program (e.g., workplace, family literacy, citizenship). Most importantly, perhaps, they provide rich information that makes sense to teachers and learners, information that is useful to programs, not just funders.

Why then, are we not seeing more of these kinds of assessments ? While extremely worthwhile and high in validity, these types of assessment carry a significant burden: they require consensus building on what is worth teaching and learning and a common understanding of what evidence of success might look like for any given skill domain. To be successful, profiles and portfolios have to be integrated into the curriculum and ongoing assessment must either be part of the day-to-day teaching we do, or time must be set aside at intake to establish baseline and toward the end of a teaching cycle to document progress. If that means the end of open-entry/open exit as we know it and forces us into shorter instructional cycles that have a clear teaching/learning focus, so be it. To give such a framework a chance, a significant amount of teacher orientation, training and buy-in will be needed.

Clearly, there are not many adult literacy programs that have the commitment, energy and resources to embark on that endeavor, although some, like the Arlington Education and Employment Program in Virginia are well on their way. But, given sufficient advocacy from local programs along with a modicum of political will on the part of state directors and other funders, teams, working groups and consortia could be set up to develop an assessment framework that, if not based on profiles, at least includes them. In fact, the National Institute for Literacy, is moving in that direction, developing an assessment framework that combines the use of alternative assessments with standardized tests where appropriate in order to capture the gains that learners make who are part of the "Equipped for the Future" initiative.

What then is the bottom line, given the current climate of accountability for accountability's sake? We have several options: we can decide that cynicism is the only sane response to the current requirements, live with standardized tests as best as we can, try to lay low, figuring "this too shall pass," or commit ourselves to fighting for a saner system for our own sake and that of our students. On the local level, we must be prepared to work with others to decide on the focus of our programs and be willing to map out a core set of knowledge, skills and strategies that matter.

At the federal level, we must push for an accountability system that is driven not by what the current standardized tests are able to assess (which is rather limited), but by outcomes that reflect what sound adult literacy programs should be all about. Furthermore, if we are asked to show accountability related to outcomes and impacts, we must be given the resources to document success in meaningful ways.

Finally, while we may need to play the accountability game for the time being, we can also work toward a system that measures effectiveness where it counts: adult learners acquiring the kinds of knowledge, skills and strategies that are important to them now and that matter in the long run. If we give up too soon, we will only marginalize adult literacy further.

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Tips on Conferencing

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Conferencing is a one-on-one meeting between the learner and the teacher. If conducted at the beginning of a cycle, conferencing can enable the learner to privately share with the teacher his/her hopes and fears about the class and any special considerations s/he may have, as well as to help the learner develop goals for the class. Conferencing at this stage is also a good way to establish a supportive, open relationship between the learner and teacher. When used mid-way and at the end of a cycle or semester, conferencing is a way to help the learner see his/her progress, to review and revise the learner's goals, to help the teacher get feedback for classroom and program improvement, and to plan for next steps.

POINTS FOR THE TEACHER

- Conference with learners three times during the cycle or semester: at start-up, mid-way, and at the end.
- Keep the conference to 30-45 minutes. Shorter than that may be too superficial; longer may limit time to meet with other learners.
- Talk about the purpose of conferencing with your learners during class time. Explain what conferencing sessions are, their purpose, and how much time they tend to take. Explain that the conference is a two-way conversation designed to inform both the learner and the teacher on ways to continue to grow and improve. Discuss the kinds of questions you ask and ask learners if they have any suggestions to make the conference a valuable one.
- Conferencing done at the start-up of a cycle may best be conducted outside class, to make a special connection with each person, to really hear what s/he has to say, to answer questions, and to help them determine what they need and want to do.
- Incorporate mid-way and end-of-semester conferencing sessions during regular class time so that neither of your schedules are overburdened. Schedule them ahead of time so that learners are expecting them, and conduct them when the class is engaged in a learning activity when your presence is not needed (when they are writing in their journals, quietly reading, working in groups on a project, etc.).
- For mid-way and end-of-semester conferences, you and the learner can prepare by having materials ready which could show learners' progress (portfolios that should include writing and reading that is important to the learner, initial goal-setting lists, learning contracts, etc.). Let the learner know beforehand the kinds of questions you will be asking (such as ways the class could be improved). Also consider any key points or critical events that you want to make sure you have time to discuss with the learner.
- If you find that you really do not have the time to meet individually with learn-

ers even during class time, consider using dialogue journals. The journal can be adapted for assessment purposes by engaging the learner in written conversations about their goals and how their goals may have changed, their thoughts about how they are meeting their goals, progress that you see, ideas about how the class or the program could be improved, etc.

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An Action Research Project

Authentic and Learner-Centered Assessment in the Beginning ESOL Classroom

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Underlying the ideas about assessment presented in this paper is an assumption about the purpose of ESOL education which may seem obvious but which I nevertheless feel is worth stating since the practices of many ESOL programs and practitioners (including myself) are not always consistent with it. This assumption is that the ultimate purpose of ESOL learning is to help learners effectively use the English language to communicate for purposes that they deem to be meaningful and useful to themselves. Acceptance of this principle necessarily leads to the question of how assessment of ESOL learning can and should be linked to the authentic purposes ESOL learners have for learning English. I believe that truly useful assessment in the ESOL classroom must at the very least help both learner and teacher to identify the learner's authentic purposes for learning English, to gain a clear and ongoing perspective on how the learner is progressing towards his/her purposes for learning English, and to evaluate how well learning activities used in the classroom are assisting this progress.

For our assessment strategies to accomplish these ends, they must necessarily be both authentic and learner-centered. By "authentic" assessment I mean assessment based on observation of how well the learner is actually able to use English for genuine communication for real-life purposes. Learner-centered assessment I will define here as assessment of learning that is either implemented by the learners themselves or, if implemented with the assistance of the teacher, is nevertheless clearly understood by the learners to be a means for understanding their own learning process, for evaluating their progress, and for evaluating the usefulness of the curriculum they are participating in and co-directing with the teacher.

Assessment that is both authentic and learner-centered is vital to good ESOL teaching/learning. Such assessment encourages learners to think about and to take responsibility for their own learning and is essential to producing curriculum that is suited to the particular needs and goals of each learner. Also, it helps learners not only to become cognizant of the fact that they are learning, if indeed they are, (this is particularly important in those cases when learners may have certain expectations about what language learning is supposed to look like which they do not see realized in their ESOL class) but to be aware of how they are moving closer, through the steps of interrelated learning activities, to fulfilling their own intrinsically-motivating purposes for learning English. Could the absence of this kind of assessment be one of the reasons for that phenomena which I am sure many adult ESOL instructors experience, namely witnessing a quiet student enter into one's ESOL program and classroom, come to class a couple times and never return? A further implication of learner-centered assessment, if it is to make learners continually cognizant of how they are learning, is that such assessment needs to be ongoing and integrated into daily classroom activity.

Having taught beginning level ESOL to adult learners in the North Carolina Community College system for several years, I have become increasingly aware of the importance of providing authentic and learner-centered assessment for my students for the reasons stated above. I have also become aware of the obstacles to implementing such assessment that ESOL teachers, and especially beginning level ESOL teachers, face in a community college setting. Therefore I chose as the goal of my action research project to explore ways for accomplishing authentic and learner-centered assessment within beginning level adult ESOL classrooms in a North Carolina Community College setting. How can this be done despite the obstacles presented by the very limited ability of many learners at this level to understand and use English and despite the open-entry/open-exit and attendance policies of North Carolina Community College system? These policies, in particular, create a challenging situation for beginning level ESOL teachers who, because of these policies, must deal with having new students with practically no English language proficiency entering their classes at any time during a term while other learners in these classes may already have made substantial progress. Under these conditions, implementing authentic and learner-centered assessment becomes enormously challenging. A certain degree of English language proficiency on the part of learners would seem to be necessary in order for learners to participate in and understand the assessment. Constant fluctuation in the student population makes it very difficult for the teacher to be consistent in the manner in which he/she assesses all of learners attending his/her class. To help answer my question, I decided I would:

1) research current literature regarding authentic and learner-centered assessment for ESOL learners,
2) design and test in my classroom assessment activity for beginning level ESOL learners which is at the same time a learning activity,
3) draw conclusions from my research and my classroom experience about how authentic and learner-centered assessment may be implemented in the beginning level ESOL classroom in an ongoing and systematic manner.

This paper documents the results of my project. I will first discuss some of the purposes for authentic and learner-centered assessment in ESOL education and some specific assessment tools I learned about through my research. Then I will talk about an assessment/learning activity which I designed to help my own students reflect on their purposes for learning English. I tested this in my classroom in April of 1998. I will discuss how this activity worked with my students. Finally, I will draw conclusions about the implementation of authentic and learner-centered assessment in beginning level ESOL classrooms within North Carolina Community Colleges based on my research and classroom experience.

WHAT I LEARNED FROM MY READINGS ON ASSESSMENT

Some Purposes for Assessment:

Through my research of current literature on assessment in ABE and ESOL, I identified several different specific purposes for assessment that require the use of different kinds of assessment tools in ESOL classrooms. Among these purposes for assessment are the following which I believe any comprehensive assessment strategy should seek to accomplish:

- to determine learners' real-life purposes for learning English
- to assess learners' language acquisition (i.e., both the language skills learners possesses as well as language abilities they still need to learn to achieve their purposes)
- to assess the degree to which learners are able to effectively use English to communicate for authentic purposes both inside and outside of the classroom
- to encourage learners to reflect on and take responsibility for their own learning
- to give both learners and teachers a clear sense of learners' progress towards learners' purposes for learning English, to inform and guide learner-centered curriculum development, to assess learning styles and learning strategies of learners in order to create learning activities that are more useful to each learner
- to evaluate learning activities used in the classroom in terms of their effectiveness in promoting learner progress

All of these purposes for assessment are mutually supportive and important to optimizing English language learning for all learners that enter our ESOL programs. These purposes also all require authentic and/or learner-centered approaches to be done effectively. I chose to focus particularly on the first of these purposes, for the part of my project involving inquiry into my own classroom, because I see the process of helping learners to reflect on and determine what their purposes are for learning English as the first essential step to be taken when attempting to implement an authentic, learner-centered assessment strategy. I will describe the results of the research I accomplished in my own classroom later in this paper, but first will discuss some other authentic and/or learner-centered assessment tools that I learned of in my survey of literature on this topic.

Some Authentic and/or Learner-centered Assessment Tools:

Below, I describe some of the authentic and/or learner-centered assessment tools which have been used in learner-centered ESOL and/or ABE classrooms which I learned of through my readings. I have included my reflections on some of these with particular regard to how feasible I believe their implementation would be in classrooms like mine. I have categorized these tools into four groupings:

1) Assessment of Learner Purposes for Learning English,
2) Assessment of Learner Progress towards Self-defined Purposes for Learning English and of English Language Acquisition in General,
3) Assessment of Learning Styles: Promoting Reflection on How Each Learner Learns Best, and
4) Assessment of Learning Activities.

I see the process of helping learners to reflect on and determine what their purposes are for learning English as the first essential step to be taken when attempting to implement an authentic, learner-centered assessment strategy.

Some of the tools can fit into more than one of these categories but I have only listed them once to avoid repetition. Most of these tools can be implemented as classroom activities but some require documentation to be done outside of class time.

For a goal setting-activity to be truly useful, especially with beginning level ESOL learners, it seems to me that it needs to be integrated into a learning activity which assists learners to understand the questions being asked of them and which guides them to reflect on and discover what their authentic needs/goals are.

1) Assessment of Learner Purposes for Learning English:

- Teacher presents a picture or photograph which shows a social situation that he/she has reason to believe may be problematic for some of the learners (i.e. a "code"). Teacher then promotes and takes note of ensuing discussion to determine issues of importance to learners and to design future curriculum more closely suited to learner needs.
- Teacher shows learners a variety of pictures and/or photographs of situations in which communication is occurring in American society. Learners choose from among these pictures those which represent situations in which they feel it is most important for them to use English. As an alternative, learners may draw their own pictures of situations in which they feel it is most important for them to be able to use English. This information is used to determine learner purposes for using English and to inform curriculum development.
- Students fill out a questionnaire regarding why they want to learn English and what their goals are.

Reflections: This last activity is similar to a method for determining student goals already used at Wake Technical Community College. Wake Tech uses a check list with predetermined goals for ESOL learners to choose from — goals such as "Higher Level of Independent Living," "Increase Daily Living Skills," "Improve Reading Skills/Comprehension," "Improve Communication Skills" etc. The problem with this method is that it rarely gives much information to the teacher that could be useful in curriculum development. Learner responses to such surveys are always too general to be helpful in this regard. Even when learners are asked through open-ended questions on a goal setting questionnaire to identify their own goals, learners still tend to give vague responses such as "to learn more English" unless they receive additional guidance and support to reflect more critically about their needs and goals. This is especially true at beginning levels. For a goal setting-activity to be truly useful, especially with beginning level ESOL learners, it seems to me that it needs to be integrated into a learning activity which assists learners to understand the questions being asked of them and which guides them to reflect on and discover what their authentic needs/goals are. Also, I believe it would be helpful to teachers and learners to define these learner goals in terms of what I would call communication targets. A communication target would identify a specific kind of message the learner wants to be able to understand and/or effectively communicate as well as the social context in which the learner needs or wants to receive and/or convey this message.

2) Assessment of Learner Progress towards Self-defined Purposes for Learning English and of English Language Acquisition in General:

- Learners orally (or through non-verbal means) indicate to the teacher when they don't understand something or feel they need more help in certain areas.

Reflections: This method of learner-centered assessment occurs naturally in ESOL classrooms where learners feel comfortable and where dialogue among learners and between learners and teacher is accepted and encouraged. Indeed, it is such a natural occurrence that it is often taken for granted by teachers. I, for one, did not even think of it as a form of assessment until after the research and reflection on the subject of assessment that my project involved.

- Learners periodically (daily or weekly) fill out a self-assessment form indicating new words, phrases, and language structures they have learned and/or used inside and outside of class. This form should also ask learners to relate their progress in language acquisition to their communication targets and should ask learners to identify areas in which they believe they need more assistance.

Reflections: In a recent article about one ESOL program's ongoing assessment strategy, authors K. Ebbit, P. Lee, P. Nelson, and J. Wheeler wrote of a three part assessment strategy being implemented at the Community Learning Center in Cambridge and Somerville, MA. The three parts of their assessment strategy are 1) goal-setting exercises, 2) weekly written self-assessment on which learners indicate what new language abilities they believe they have learned using standardized forms developed for this purpose, and 3) a progress record which consists of a checklist filled out by students at the end of a unit and kept as a record to help learners recall what topics and language skills were covered in their class over a given period. This provides learners an opportunity to indicate whether they feel they have mastered a topic or skill to their satisfaction or whether they feel they would like to learn more about or need more practice in a certain area. Judging from the experiences which the authors describe, it would seem (as I certainly would have suspected given my own experience teaching beginning level ESOL) that the second part of this approach to assessment (i.e. the weekly written self-assessment) was the most problematic of the three, especially with low level ESOL learners, due to the excessive amount of time needed to help these learners understand the forms (both the language and the purpose of the form), and fill them out. It also seemed to me that some of the information asked for, such as "What new words have you learned?", was not a particularly useful assessment of ESOL learning. Would it not be more useful to teachers and learners to also know how and in what contexts these new words were used and whether or not the learner was able to communicate effectively using these words (i.e., Communicative effectiveness is an outcome of more factors than simply the knowledge of vocabulary. Other factors that determine a person's ability to effectively communicate are pronunciation, understanding and use of appropriate language structures, understanding of cultural norms, self-confidence/ assertiveness etc. and need also to be assessed to accurately evaluate the learner's ability to communicate effectively in English).

- Learners are periodically given formal oral and written exams which reflect themes and language taught in class over a given period of time. On a more limited scale, any cloze exercise given after introducing new vocabulary and language structures can be viewed as a mini-exam for determining how much of the information taught in the form of vocabulary, grammar and/or spelling was retained by the learners.

Reflections: It seems to me that this method could help to reinforce what learners have studied in previous classes and give both teachers and learners a better sense of what areas learners may need more practice in. For tests to do this, however, they would need to be prepared by teachers (as opposed to standardized) and be directly related to the material learners have covered before the test is given (unlike the B.E.S.T. test). My guess is that it would be challenging to implement this assessment strategy other than in the simple form of cloze exercises at the beginning level because of limited language proficiency and literacy skills of many beginning ESOL students.

- LEA (Language Experience Approach) learning activities can also be viewed as assessment activities since they record learners' knowledge of vocabulary and grammar at a given moment. [For more information on the Language Experience Approach see Margaret Gransee's paper in this collection.]
- Using a teacher's observation log which may be in the form of a journal or a standardized form, the teacher takes a little time at the end of each class to take note of learners' abilities and needs which learners demonstrated during class. This method may be used to assess the following:

1) learners' ability to communicate orally (by noting learner miscues and newly demonstrated abilities),
2) learners' literacy skills (also by noting learners' miscues and newly demonstrated abilities as evidences in samples of their writing or in their demonstrated reading comprehension),
3) the degree to which learners seem "engaged" by the learning activities (in order to evaluate learners' interest in a given learning activity and the effectiveness of the activity for each learner),
4) learners' self-confidence, and
5) the interests/survival needs that learners have in their everyday lives as evidenced by comments made in casual conversation with them.

Reflections: This assessment tool would probably be useful to the teacher (by helping him/her to take note of each learner's demonstrated language skills, language needs, and learning styles and to adapt curriculum to these) and would be a valuable guide to future curriculum development, but it wouldn't give the learner an indication of the progress he/she is making (unless it is regularly shared with the learners). It also could become very time consuming for teachers to consistently do this kind of assessment after each class for each student who attended the class. To expect teachers who are not paid for preparation time to find more time outside of their paid teaching time to consistently keep track of this kind of data is, it seems to me, a lot to ask. On the other hand, perhaps if the teacher's log had a simple format and if the teacher/student ratio were ideal and attendance were consistent, then it would be a more feasible, and no doubt valuable, assessment tool for beginning adult ESOL teachers in NC Community Colleges.

- The teacher uses a tape recorder to periodically assess each learner's ability to orally communicate in English. The teacher develops a standard set of questions to ask learners at different times in the course of a semester and the resulting interviews are taped. Both teacher and learner can thus assess learner progress in English language acquisition over a period of time by listening to earlier and then later tape recordings of interviews with a given learner and noting the change in the learner's ability to communicate effectively in response to the same questions.

Reflections: While this method sounds like it would be useful, it doesn't seem to lend itself to use in the beginning level ESOL classes I have taught at Wake Tech and other community colleges. The problem is that I can't afford to take time to do this with each student. The inconsistent attendance of learners further complicates things since it would require me, if I felt obligated to assess every student in like manner, to interrupt my planned learning activity whenever a learner that needed to be assessed happened to show up in class in order to take time to interview and tape him/her. This method might be more viable if I had a regular teacher's aide to help (the one intake person at most of Wake Tech's larger off-campus adult learning sites might be able to help with this but they seem to me to already be overworked).

3) Assessment of Learning Styles: Promoting Reflection on How Each Learner Learns Best:

- Group Activity: The class is divided into two groups. One group is asked to complete the phrase "It's easy to learn when...." The other group is asked to complete the phrase "It's hard to learn when...." Ideas which come up in each group's discussion are then shared with the whole class. Teacher promotes discussion of the responses each small group generated. (*Adventures in Assessment*, Vol. 4)

Reflections: This activity may work well to encourage learners to begin to think about their own learning, about how they learn best, and also give the teacher information about students' learning styles as well as feedback regarding which kinds of learning activities are most useful for which students. However, this activity would require of beginning ESOL learners a degree of proficiency in English that they probably would not acquire until they are ready to move to a higher level of ESOL learning.

4) Assessment of Learning Activities:

- Learners respond to a questionnaire regarding which of the learning activities in their class are working and which are not working for them. This questionnaire would be filled out regularly (i.e. daily or weekly) by learners.
- As a regular class ritual, the teacher takes a period of time at the end of each class to ask learners what they learned today, which learning activities were most useful for them, what they liked and disliked about the class, what else they want to learn, etc. The teacher takes note of learner responses. Once taking time to get this kind of feedback from learners becomes an established routine "learners will feel more comfortable with giving feedback and move from

'everything is fine' to 'I would like to see [blank] in class.'" (Gear, p. 47)

MY CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE: ONE ASSESSMENT/LEARNING ACTIVITY FOR DETERMINING LEARNER PURPOSES FOR LEARNING ENGLISH

I was teaching a Beginning level ESOL class and was about halfway through the spring term of classes at Wake Technical Community College when I decided to see if my learners had acquired enough English to be able to engage in some meaningful dialogue about what was important to them in their lives and to what purposes for communicating in English they gave highest priority. I designed an assessment/learning activity which I entitled "What is important?" On the night I tried out this activity, I had nine students in attendance. Of these nine, seven were regulars, one was a student who sporadically attended, and one had come to my class for the first time. Seven of the nine were from Mexico, one was from Iran, and one from Vietnam.

I began the activity by writing the question on my overhead projector, "What is important?" After spending some time explaining the meaning of "important" (for the sake of one student who didn't understand the word), I drew a picture of a plant and asked the class to identify what it was. Then I drew a sun shining on the plant and a rain cloud raining on the plant and asked the class, "Is the sun important for the plant?" and "Is the rain important for the plant?" Everyone agreed that both the sun and the rain were important for the plant. Then I replaced the picture of the plant with a human stick figure and asked them to tell me what it was. One student said "people." I introduced the word "human being" explaining that it had the same meaning as "a person" or "somebody."

I then posed the question, "What is important for human beings?" Quite an extensive list of things important for people was generated by the class which I copied down on the chalkboard. Among the examples offered by my students of things they believed to be important for human beings were:

sun, water, food, oxygen, other animals, family, job, tools [such as computer, car], money, education, understanding/communication, culture, good character, religion, recreation, health [exercise, medicine, doctors, good air, good water, good food], transportation, God.

When asked, "What is more important, job or family?", everyone agreed that family was more important. I asked a few more questions contrasting the relative importance of pairs of the important things from the list my students had generated. These questions generated some discussion and my students were able to come to agreement on answers to each question. Finally, I asked "What is the most important?" One of my students responded that God was most important because everything else on our list of important things came from God. The rest of the class agreed.

At this point, after having contemplated what is of ultimate importance to human beings, the learners were ready to contemplate what the importance of learning English was for them personally. I posed a new question, "Why is it important FOR YOU to speak, read and write English?" I emphasized "FOR YOU" as I asked each individual student to give their own answer to this question. The students brainstormed and I listed their responses on the chalkboard. Their responses were as follows:

to communicate, shopping [food, clothes, shoes, car], work, doctor, church, hospital, telephone, telephone bill, looking for work, to progress in your job, to go to the post office, immigration, renting an apartment, to learn more about life, to express my ideas/to talk about my ideas, transportation [airport, taxi, bus, go to car mechanic], recreation [to visit the zoo, to go to the movies], to learn more about US culture and history, go to court, lawyer.

When the class seemed to have exhausted its ideas, I asked each student individually to pick one or two of the purposes for learning from the list which they felt were the MOST important for them personally. The result was that "work" and "to express my ideas" both received the highest number of votes (with four votes each) followed by "shopping" and "doctor" (with two votes each) followed by "hospital," "telephone," "telephone bill," "looking for work," "renting an apartment," "immigration," "to learn more about life," "recreation," "to learn more about US culture and history" each of which received a single vote.

My learners all seemed to enjoy and participate enthusiastically in this activity. When one student asked me with a smile, "Why is this important for you?" (referring to this lesson), I answered, "So I can teach you better. So I can teach you what you need." This statement regarding the purpose of this activity resulted in further smiles from students. In retrospect I see that one way in which this activity failed is that at the end of the activity each student did not have an individual list of specific goals they wanted to work towards. I found it challenging to both facilitate the activity and at the same time keep note of what purposes for learning English were important to which individual students and I was not able to recall after the lesson all of the particular goals of each individual learner. I was able to record, by copying down the student-generated lists that I had copied onto the chalkboard, which purposes were of greatest importance to the class as whole. This information in itself was valuable to guide my future curriculum development. Having an aide or volunteer in the classroom during this activity to record each student's individual responses might have helped me end up also with a record of individual goals/needs. Another possibility which I had not considered but which I will try in the future is to have students write down their votes for their most important purposes for learning English and collect these at the end of the activity.

CONCLUSION

To best serve adult ESOL learners, an ESOL teacher needs to acquire the kind of information about each of his/her learners that ongoing authentic and learner-centered assessment can best provide. Upon acquiring this information, it furthermore needs to be shared with and understood by learners and used to guide subsequent curriculum development. Such assessment should not be viewed as separate from learning but rather should, on a regular basis, be integrated into learning activities. It should identify and measure learners' progress towards their self-defined, real life needs and purposes for learning English. Authentic and learner-centered assessment involves such obvious practices as noticing and appropriately responding to the apparent confusion, the silence or the questions of learners and further involves teachers taking note of learners'

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responses to learning activities, noticing how each learner learns best, paying attention to learners' use of the English language as well as to the questions they ask and concerns they express. Perhaps most importantly, such assessment also necessarily involves, and indeed is based on, dialogue between teachers and learners. Such dialogue should eventually cause learners to become accustomed to monitoring and managing their own learning rather than relying entirely on their teacher to do this for them.

The LEIS forms and the BEST test currently in use at Wake Technical Community College do not meet the criteria mentioned above. More authentic and learner-centered assessment provided on an ongoing basis would clearly be preferable, but before a comprehensive, ongoing, authentic and learner-centered strategy for assessment can be implemented in the North Carolina Community College setting, the status of ESOL teachers within the North Carolina Community College System in my opinion would have to change. Currently, the task of implementing authentic and learner-centered assessment in a comprehensive manner would, I believe, prove unmanageable for most of the ESOL teachers in North Carolina's Community College System who are, as far as I am aware, all part-time teachers who do not receive pay for their class preparation time much less for the amount of extra time it would take them to implement a more ideal system of assessment. On the other hand, if teachers were paid for class preparation time, then they could be expected to implement their own comprehensive assessment plan in their classrooms using authentic and learner-centered approaches (including perhaps some of the assessment tools described in this paper) and could justifiably be held accountable for doing so. Barring such a change in the North Carolina Community College System's policies, the ongoing use of authentic and learner-centered approaches to assessment in North Carolina community college ESOL classrooms I am sure will remain the exception rather than the rule.

North Carolina Community Colleges' open-entry/open-exit policy presents a further obstacle to implementing the kind of meaningful assessment of adult ESOL learners this paper proposes, and, as I have explained earlier, this is most especially true in beginning level ESOL classes. Because this policy allows new students to enter classes at any time during a term, there is almost never a time when every student attending a given beginning level ESOL class has acquired sufficient English to understand and participate in regular, learner-centered assessment.

Despite these systemic obstacles, I believe ESOL teachers in community college settings can and should try to find creative ways to provide authentic and learner-centered assessment for their learners. While this probably can not be done as consistently and comprehensively as would be ideal given the institutional constraints these teachers work under, the more it can be provided to our ESOL learners, even to a small degree, the better these learners will be served. Informal forms of assessment such as teacher observations of learners' authentic use of English in the classroom and of student verbal and nonverbal responses to learning activities are perhaps the most viable means of authentic assessment that beginning level ESOL community college teachers can implement in their classrooms. Some initial learning activity for assessing learners' specific purposes for learning English (i.e. communication targets) that involves dialogue with and reflection on the part of learners is also very important but again, given the inconsistent attendance of learners and the limited English language proficiency of beginning level ESOL learners in our community college ESOL classrooms, it would be difficult for beginning level adult ESOL teachers to provide this kind of assessment consistently for all the students who choose to enter their classrooms at a North Carolina community college throughout the course of a given term.

In conclusion, authentic and learner-centered assessment is vitally important to learners, teachers and stakeholders in the process of ESOL education. Such assessment is important to learners in that it helps them clarify their needs and goals for learning English, gives them a sense of their progress towards these goals which they are intrinsically motivated to attain, and helps them evaluate and take responsibility for their own learning. It is important to teachers in designing, and continually re-evaluating the effectiveness of learner-centered curriculum that genuinely meets learner needs and helps them progress toward their goals. It is important for administrators, funders and policymakers in that it can help them gain a more realistic picture of how the real outcomes and effectiveness of ESOL programs can best be measured. My hope is that ESOL learners, practitioners, and stakeholders in North Carolina may work together towards better serving the ESOL learners in our state by engaging in an ongoing evaluation of our assessment practices and making the institutional changes needed to encourage the implementation of truly useful, authentic and learner-centered assessment in our adult ESOL classrooms.

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MY LESSON PLAN: WHAT IS IMPORTANT?

1. Introduce new vocabulary "important."

Write on chalkboard or overhead, "WHAT IS IMPORTANT?"

Check to see if everyone understands "important." If not, take drivers license from your pocket, make sure everyone sees what it is, and say, "This is important! I NEED my drivers license. If I have no drivers license, I can not drive my car." Then, take a tissue from your pocket and say, "This is not important." Saying this, throw the tissue into the trash.

Draw a picture of a plant on the chalkboard and ask, "What is this?" Then draw sun and rain and ask students what each of these are.

Then ask,

Q:Is the sun important for the plant? Why?
  Is the rain important for the plant? Why?
WRITE THESE QUESTIONS AND LEARNER RESPONSES ON THE CHALKBOARD OR OVERHEAD.

2. Replace the plant in the picture with a human stick figure and ask, "What is this?" Write "human being" underneath the stick figure and explain the term "human being." Then ask the whole class, "WHAT IS IMPORTANT FOR A HUMAN BEING?" as you write this question on the chalkboard or overhead,

Teacher: What is important for you?
Is (a job, money, learning English, watching TV, sleeping, eating, your pencil, your car, buying new clothes, your family, President Clinton, my cat, government, religion, God etc.) important?
Student: Yes, it is. (or) No, it isn't. (or) Sometimes it's important.
Teacher: Why?

Promote discussion. Create a list of student responses to the question "What is important?"

To promote further discussion. Interject the following questions as learners seem to be running out of ideas:
Teacher: What is more important, _______ or _________? Why?
Teacher: What is most important for you?

3. Upon completing the preceding activity, write the following question on the chalkboard and then read it:

Why is it important FOR YOU to understand, and speak, and read, and write English?

Make sure students understand the words "understand," "speak," "read," "write." Promote discussion as before. Copy student responses onto chalkboard or overhead.

4. PICTURE EXERCISE (for lower level students)

T: Where is speaking, and reading, and writing English important FOR YOU? (pointing to pictures of Doctor, Telephone, Jobs + Work, Food Shopping, Feelings/ How are you?, etc.)

5. When the list of reasons and/or places where using English is important for your students is complete, ask,

T: Which one is the most important?

Ask each student individually to vote for one or two reasons for learning English that are the most important for him or her. Keep track of student votes.

In the ESOL Classroom

Reflections on Meeting the Challenge of Assessment with Beginning Students

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I currently teach two classes. In the morning, I teach a Beginning class. There are two men from Congo, one from Angola, three from Mexico, three from Vietnam, one of whom is an ethnic Montagnard, and one from Taiwan. There are also three women: one Palestinian, one from Somalia, and most recently, one from Mexico. The students range in age from 21 to 75.

The Palestinian woman and one of the Mexican men never had formal classroom training. One of the men from Congo was institutionalized for a substantial portion of his life and also had no classroom experience. The man from Angola was formerly a mathematics instructor in his country. The Palestinian, Mexican, Congolese, and Taiwanese had no prior formal experience with writing using the English alphabet.

In the afternoon, I teach an Intermediate class, which also has an educationally varied population. At various points during the semester, I have had two Bulgarian men, two Indian men, one Indian woman, a man from Congo, one from Togo, a Korean woman, two Brazilian women, two Mexican men, three men from the Dominican Republic, and most recently, a woman from France. They range in age from 19 to 50.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

In the course of teaching ESOL formally over the past four years, I have realized that our program lacks repetitive standardized testing that provides teachers with hard evidence to support progress recommendations for advancement. Having come from a background in the elementary schools of set-in-stone curricula, and "teaching to pass that math or reading exam coming up in spring" or "teaching to the test," the idea of "nothing in stone" was new to me. It did not occur to me that any other kind of assessment could be valid. With this in mind, I approached assessment with great hesitation. Several questions came to mind. How could I find where students really were in terms of their ability? How could I find what progress they had made? How and where would I be able to document that progress? Should they be privy to the information? I was entering into a non-traditional background from a traditional one. At the community college and in the program where I work, the focus is on helping students with life skills. In the simplest sense, that meant not only was it our job to teach students the mechanics of the language, but more importantly, expose them in as broad a sense as possible to real-life situations and the language involved in functioning in those situations.

Our college has three assessment tools. The BEST is used upon entry into the program to help those interviewing the new students approximate in what level class those students belong. The next is an interview form the students are required to answer verbally. The person who is registering the student asks his/her name, address, other personal information, and why the student has come to the United

States. During the course of this interview, the individual conducting the interview decides in which level the student might be successful. The last is a series of areas on the back of a student information card where the teachers are required at the beginning and the end of the session to make blanket statements about students' goals and progress. Often, decisions regarding the readiness of our students to go on to the next level are based on these notes.

The BEST works very well for those students who come to our program with a minimal level of proficiency in English, but often pre-beginning, and beginning students are not able to take the test, even though it does not reflect their capacity to learn, or other areas of acuity. The student information cards have very general categories and no guidelines for getting information regarding students' specific goals.

Initially, my project began with the question, what did my students already know? The BEST test gives a teacher limited information at best. How could I record the amount of English my students already possessed? How could I help them articulate what they wanted from my class? It seemed an overwhelming task, but I was willing to try.

Because my Intermediate students were more capable of expressing their needs, I started by asking them open-ended questions about what they thought they needed or what they wanted from me and the class. I attempted to give them opportunities to describe anything in their daily interactions in English that caused specific difficulties for them. I suggested that they make a mental or written note of these issues and bring them to class to share so that everyone could benefit from them.

Yet from the beginning of the project, I had a sinking feeling that there was something I was doing of which I wasn't entirely aware. This led me to do some reading about what could be considered assessment. In the midst of this process my focus changed from trying to find out students' goals to determining which kind of assessment would allow me deeper insight into how the process can be effectively carried out. In the project, I decided instead to determine which tools are the most feasible for assessing and making the case for what worked best in my personal teaching situation.

The importance of this project has two parts. First of all, I hope that by looking at what can be done to get at students' goals, we will eventually change the system we currently use to record those goals and have them articulated by students themselves. Second, it is essential that we be able to better address the specific problems that are inherent in charting the progress of and meeting the specific needs of our entry-level students with practical assessment tools.

PUTTING OUT FEELERS

Since I came with a limited view of any other kind of assessment and no experience in how to carry it out, I took to reading about different types. I discovered with great interest that there are several kinds of assessments included among those classified as "alternative." Alternative assessment is based on daily classroom activities and "includes a variety of instruments that can be adapted to varying situations" (Huerta-Macias, 1995). This made sense to me. So again, the question of how to do this with beginners came up. I am trying to look at where they are when they put their feet in the door. What indicators should I

I had been working under the assumption that any kind of assessment would have to be formal, in some kind of questionnaire form, and that I would have to have masses of those questionnaires repeated over time for them to be valid.

be looking for?

I also set out to gather information on indicators into the goals of emergent speakers and writers. Was there a survey that one could administer to pre-beginning or pre-literate students? Many of the tasks I read about were for students who could already complete coherent sentences. Among the methods that I read about were: student portfolios, learner logs, cloze activities, learner grids, learner profiles, teacher observations, and formal surveys. While reading about these tools, I realized that many teachers in our program had used the most limited and probably the least productive of these methods, or we had not validated the methods that were being used. I discovered that the student's same day-to-day activities (e.g. writing, role-playing, group discussion) are the basis for alternative assessment (Huerta-Macias, 1995).

I had been working under the assumption that any kind of assessment would have to be formal, in some kind of questionnaire form, and that I would have to have masses of those questionnaires repeated over time for them to be valid. The more I read, however, the more I discovered that many other teachers and I had been charting students' progress through personal observation. In one piece I read that discussed using reader logs as assessment tools, the writer admitted that the instructor found lower-level learners had difficulty responding. Very often the statement "some things I like" was answered "I like everything" (Gear, 1993). It is this kind of generality in students' surveys with open-ended questions that makes assessing beginning students particularly frustrating. This issue is complicated if the students cannot understand the scope of what is being asked of them, and there are no translation helps in the class because no one else speaks the person's language.

The same article mentions another really helpful assessment tool: an individual exit interview with the instructor (Gear, 1993). In our program, students complete an evaluation of the teacher at the end of each 15-17 week session. The evaluation includes questions about the teacher's preparedness, how well she has helped the students reach their goals, and her demeanor. The language on the survey is problematic for beginning students if they don't have an interpreter. It has an area for comments but the survey is more for information than a measure of the students' understanding of what they learned.

Complicating the issue of assessment on all levels is our attendance policy, which is open entry, allowing for much elasticity in a student's attendance - perhaps too much to get an accurate measure of where our students started and where they end up at the end of a session.

Encased in any assessment activity should be activities designed to help students become self-aware. One of the mission statements of assessment should be that self-assessment is highly important for successful language learning (McNamara, Dean, 1995). By working with what a student thinks he wants to learn, we can help students establish realistic expectations about what language skills they need to achieve their goals (McNamara, Dean, 1995). The most important piece is helping students establish their expectations. Assessment is needed to help them develop internal indicators for where they stand in their ability. It also makes it imperative to include them in the assessment, not as guinea pigs, but as active participants in its shaping. The challenge in this at the beginning level is that it may take more time for them to learn the language needed to articulate if they like the style of questioning than there is time to complete the questions themselves. A way around this is performance-based assessments that ask learners to complete tasks or take part in simulations (Spruck, Wrigley, 1992). Any kind of role playing or oral testing as well as writing of basic information would be assessment activities with documentable results.

TRIAL ... AND ERROR ... AND TRIAL

With this information in hand, I decided to look at the two types of assessment I used most in my practice: informal student-teacher discussions on what students felt was important, and open-ended questions. Since I began my project with my intermediate students, I would like to first share what questions were discussed with them.

In the first three weeks of my intermediate class, I posed several questions to the students to have them consider what they wanted to be able to do with the language. In the past, I had literally asked students what they wanted to learn and they would give me some very general answer like "grammar" or "pronunciation." I believe a language can't be learned just by knowing the mechanics. One must understand the context in which language is used. In my intermediate classes I constantly attempt to get students to understand that they know many of the mechanics to speak already. What is needed are the contexts in which to use the language, and fine-tuning of skills.

On the board, I wrote the following questions:

1) I wish I could__________in English.

2) If I knew how to _______in English it would be great.

3) What I want to know how to say is________.

I expected answers that were very broad and non-specific. In this particular exercise, I didn't ask students to write anything down, but to discuss their answers. Here are some of the things they said:

1) I wish I could ______ in English.

sing- know songs
solve ex-wife problems
tell romantic stories

talk about sports
talk about what I do in my country

understand news
understand TV show
describe what I'm thinking

tell jokes   say the names of spices
make a woman fall in love with me

2) If I knew how to _________ in English it would be great.

get involved in English conversations with Americans

talk about philosophy

3) What I want to know how to say is_________.

the way I feel in class
what to say for a job interview

friendly words
words to make happy

I was really surprised at the things that students expressed an interest in. Not one student mentioned grammar. They all talked about how they could fit into the scheme of things in their lives here in the

U.S. Perhaps answers of this nature are based on difficult experiences students had when first trying to adjust to their new lives. It may be that the more opportunities for social interaction that students have, the more they see the need for practical uses of English.

Every week I also asked them questions about what they had learned, what they liked and didn't like. I didn't find this line of questioning to be as successful.

I would post the following questions on the board at the end of the week:

1) This week I learned about___________.
2) I liked _________. It helped me a lot.
3) I didn't like _________. It didn't help me.

Eliciting answers from these questions was considerably more difficult. I'm not sure if it was because I was immediately throwing students into a self-assessment role or if their expectations were still unclear to me.

1) This week I learned about___________.

   who is everybody in class
   body language/gestures
   voice register pronouns

2) I liked _________. It helped me a lot

   learning the names
   asking questions about American culture
   everything

3) I didn't like _______. It didn't help.

   too much talking

At the end of the third week, attendance went from 18 students in my intermediate class to three. I thought perhaps I had overwhelmed them with the line of questioning I had taken. Normally, part of the introductory process in my class includes ice-breaking activities. I insist that students get to know one another so they are not strangers. It takes about that three-week period for them to feel comfortable with each other and with the notion of becoming self-aware. It also takes me about that amount of time to get an idea about which direction to take my class.

I didn't realize at the time that I was constantly making mental notes about everything involving my students: who was very talkative, who wasn't, and who seemed willing to engage in class activities which might seem unusual to them. I noted who thought my speech was too fast, who acknowledged it, and who felt constrained that I had a special role or place as "the teacher." I paid close attention to who seemed willing to talk about their personal lives and who was extremely reticent or evasive. I watched for signs of boredom, involvement, and lack of comprehension through facial expressions and body language. I paid attention to who constantly felt the need to speak in their own language if they came with a companion from their country and who seemed reluctant to ask questions.

This is a process I have engaged in since I began teaching ESL, but because it never involved written tests of any kind, I didn't even consider that I was doing assessment. To my misfortune, I didn't record my notes because I considered them for my personal use only and not very effective in helping anyone other than me. I learned, however, that this information, even though not officially recorded, was viable to use for assessment, and in the future, worth mapping out. I realized also that, based on my personal observation of students, I was making decisions about what they were interested in studying and how capable or willing they were to advance in dealing with *one* American. In the face of working with three or four students, I didn't think I had enough to make a real case for this kind of assessment.

I then thought to modify the open-ended question format for my beginning class, which had much more consistent attendance. I wrote on the board:

I like________.
I don't like________.
In English I can________.
I want________.
I don't want________.

I explained "like" with a gesture of thumbs up and synonyms such as good and okay, and I explained "don't like" with a thumbs down sign and synonyms such as bad and shook my head in the negative. To help them understand "can", I gave them examples of what they could do, such as speak in their native languages, and cook or work, depending on what the students seemed to express as their interests. It was an activity in itself to get the students to talk about themselves.

Their answers to these open-ended questions were varied. One of the Mexican men wrote:

"I like weldin, money, dance worken (working).
I don't like cold, rainy.
In English I can yes, okay, I like.
In English I cannot pronunciation.

The Somalian woman wrote:
I like my eyes.
I like mosque.
I wan to go school
I don't want club
I don't want cinema

The Montagnard man wrote:
I like corn.
I like put a pant.
I don't like eat mushrooms
In English I cannot say understand
I want-say I love you
I don't want eat chicken

The Taiwanese man wrote:
I like woman-girl-mother
I don't like winter-paint-shovel
I can cut cook clear trim"

I told them they could use picture dictionaries to carry out this exercise. During its course, I observed them. Who took the initiative to tell me they were stuck or unclear about the exercise, and who just waited for the end of the exercise to see the results of everyone else? Who wanted me to look immediately at their work, and who had reservations? It seemed these types of activities, while the activity itself was important, were just additional ways to determine who seemed motivated and unafraid, and who needed motivation. I was frustrated with the generalities of the answers and looked for another way to get at exactly what the students thought they were supposed to be getting from English class.

Trying to help students feel comfortable enough to express their needs, I presented myself not as the authority of the classroom, but only as the authority in the language. I led them in modeled activities, which included talking about themselves and their everyday experiences, by sharing my life with them. I shared what I thought was good and bad and encouraged them to do the same. I was not sure that the example I was trying to set was having an impact until something amazing happened. One of the Mexican men who had recently joined the class said one day that he wanted to learn how to get food at McDonald's. He didn't exactly use that terminology. It was more like "Eat

McDonald's how?" From his request came a two-week lesson on ordering food from fast food restaurants, which included vocabulary, speaking and listening, and writing practice. Even the most disengaged students became more active in their participation. After this incident my beginning students started to ask simple questions about how to spell certain words. Even the Taiwanese man lost his hesitation and would stop the lessons in the middle of a word or sentence to clarify a letter and the sound that went with it. One of the other Mexican men took the initiative to be the server and waited on the whole class.

I repeatedly teach words used to ask questions in my beginning class in an effort to get them to understand what people are asking them. It is also to help them understand how to ask questions themselves. Part of my observation at the close of the session has to do with who seems to have overcome fear of mistakes and who has learned to encourage his fellow classmates. It may not seem that this is related to assessment. Yet as part of teacher observation, forward movement of this kind is crucial in determining how far students have come in their overall communication skills. It suggests a comfortability with the language that cannot be quantified on any kind of standardized testing.

While recording these reflections, I have come to realize that the most comprehensive form of assessment that I have as an instructor is my personal observations.

CLOSING STATEMENTS: A WORK IN PROGRESS

While recording these reflections, I have come to realize that the most comprehensive form of assessment that I have as an instructor is my personal observations. It is, however, lacking in some components. In one of the articles I perused in my research, one practitioner observed that she had not asked the learners to help develop this list of strategies with her. Therefore she risked asking them to measure themselves against objectives which may not be realistic goals for them or which simply may not be their goals (Barry, 1993). My observations as a teacher are not so much an accurate reflection of students' goals, but rather of the standards by which I determine where students are in their ability to handle the language. It would be effective in the future to record these questions on a graph or chart and expose them to the class as the pointer that I use to figure out if they are ready to go on to the next class. In this way, if they disagreed with my line of reasoning, they could become active participants in revising the questions. This would work particularly well to integrate students' self articulated goals. In the case of upper level learners, this approach would make the most sense. With beginning learners, however, it seems that it would be more effective for the teacher to make a chart with pictures that depicted students' progress in functional areas, such as writing the entire alphabet, or memorizing their address and phone number correctly, or learning to ask for food or directions in a grocery store.

No matter what form teacher observations take, teachers in any program should collectively note what they observe and pool the information to create a document or documents that could be circulated throughout the levels, along with the currently used form as a guideline for documenting ongoing assessment. This last step would serve to deflect any criticism that observation is not a documentable means of assessment. Since viable documentation should be part of the goal of assessment, it makes sense to have a form that consists of teacher and student observations. The current information in use is much too broad to reflect what specific progress has been made.

Something else to consider is that observations should be continuous, not necessarily at measurable intervals. By recording segments of conversations with students over time, a teacher can gather a true reflection of their views of themselves as learners (Barry, 1993). It isn't necessary that a log of these conversations be formally-recorded events, but that they are annotated according to the date that they take place. It could be more a jotting down of impromptu blurbs.

I come away from this project with a clearer knowledge of how to enable my students to be aware of their desires regarding English, other than just knowing the structures of the language. I also gained insight into how to record my students' progress using tools which I already possess and use on an informal but ongoing basis. I have acquired a vision of how our current assessment tools can be adapted and/or modified to help teachers better capture their students' progress. It would also be helpful for teachers to take a bigger stake in their students' progress by conducting interviews with them on an individual basis at the end of the session to see where each student stands, and to record the outcome of this interview.

My hope is that, in spite of any obstacles that are inherently a part of programs such as this, other ESOL instructors will see that it is possible to determine the needs of the moment from their students, no matter what their level.

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Learning from Experience

Action Research

by
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New Bedford Adult
Education Program

In conducting action research, I intended to demonstrate the limitations of the standardized testing (English as a Second Language Oral Assessment) used in our program. I approached the research with a preconceived opinion that a variety of more suitable tests would provide valid information about our students and be learner-centered. Based on my own dissatisfaction with this test — a feeling shared by the majority of teachers — I believed I could develop a more appropriate test which would meet the needs of all.

As I continued my research a whole new perspective emerged. The fault in the process was not the test itself; in fact the test was suited for its intended purpose. The use of the ESOLA was primarily a bookkeeping measure, another piece of accountability which staff members "expected" to provide information about the learner in the program

I reviewed my program and saw how it can be improved. During our future program development time, the teachers and I will review how to develop authentic assessment which can be used in conjunction with standardized testing to provide teachers with information they need to assess the progress of students and the success of the curriculum.

RESEARCH QUESTION: HOW IS THE ESOLA TEST BEING USED IN THE NEW BEDFORD ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAM?

In a decade when educational accountability is expected, many adult education programs have sought to document learners' progress and ensure future funding through standardized tests. Given this prevailing climate, the New Bedford Adult Education Program incorporated the use of the ESOLA for initial student placement and as a periodic evaluation to document student progress. As stated in the rationale of the test booklet this test could be used to determine:

1. Student entry level
2. Student progress level
3. Student ability to follow directions
4. Student ability to follow English patterns
5. Students ability to use specific basic vocabulary.

What emerged from a periodic administration of this test, however, was teacher dissatisfaction with repeated use of a single test which provided little or no information on learner progress. To address the issue of ESOLA's effectiveness, it is necessary to examine how the test is used for student placement and to evaluate student progress.

My inquiry began with research in how the ESOL literacy is currently assessed. I looked at three articles "Learner Assessment in Adult ESL Literacy" by Heide Spruck Wrigely, "Adult ESL Learner Assessment Purposes and Tools" by Miriam Burtand and Fran Keenan, and "Assessing Integrated Language" by Deborah Short.

As stated in the research, standardized tests are cost effective, time efficient and meet documentation needs. But by their very nature are one dimensional activities which cannot measure the complexity of language or learning. A detailed review of the ESOLA illustrates that it does meet the criteria of a standardized test. It utilizes basic vocabulary: chair, coat, ear. It increases in difficulty as you progress through four levels. It does address English language patterns and the ability to follow directions. It does deal with basic and advanced language skills and its progression in literacy is logical.

What it lacks, however, is the use of any simulated real life activities, such as social conversation, reading food labels, or writing simple sentences. Nonetheless, it remains, theoretically, a valid instrument based on sound educational research.

I then distributed teacher and student surveys (see Figure A) to determine whether the ESOLA test provides accurate initial information for student placement. These surveys and interviews conducted suggest that the ESOLA has been a reliable initial placement instrument. The test could be expanded to include writing samples for more advanced students, but for placement purposes it is sufficient.

The ESOLA is also used to periodically evaluate student progress; it is administered twice annually. Primarily used to meet program requirements, it is a numerical indicator of student success as listed by increasing test score to insure future funding.

Since assessment is an important part of learning, teachers view assessment as a method of evaluating the success of their curriculum and as a method of meeting the needs of their students. At present, they view the administration of the ESOLA as a monotonous process which yields only a flat number score. What is more, the basic vocabulary and language patterns used in the test are not addressed in the present curriculum. This is an artificial testing situation.

FIGURE A

TEACHER SURVEY #1
NAME______________________________

Using a scale of 1-6 please answer the following questions?

1	2	3	4	5	6
not at all	somewhat	neutral	at times	yes	definitely

1. Do you feel that the present student placement process is accurate?__________
2. Do you feel that the ESOLA test is an adequate indicator of a student's level?_____
3. Do you find yourself moving students to another class soon after placement?______

STUDENT SURVEY #1
NAME ______________________________

1. Do you like the class you are attending? Yes No
2. Do you feel that the teacher can help you learn? Yes No
3. Do you feel this class is too easy? Yes No
4. Do you feel this class is too hard? Yes No
5. Would you like another class better? Yes No

The entire process of reporting student progress needs to be expanded so that it will not only show minimal gains but actually reflect all the personal achievement made during the academic year.

In order to illustrate the test's shortcomings, I will talk about two learners. One student attended faithfully for a two-year period and made significant oral language gains. Yet her test scores indicate only slight progress. Another, who attended faithfully for a three-year period, used her skills to obtain citizenship and a job promotion. Yet her scores indicate erratic progress and some regression during this time.

In order to clarify this situation, I conducted an individual survey with four teachers and eight students. The following questions were used

Teacher interview

Do you enjoy administering the ESOLA test?

Do you feel it provides you with useful information?

Do you feel it provides you with accurate information?

Do you feel it reflects what you teach?

Can you use this test to improve teaching techniques?

Does it meet your students' goals?

Student interview

Do you like the test?

Do you feel it helps you?

Why do you take the test?

The results were hardly surprising. Both teachers and students failed to see the correlation between the testing and the instruction occurring in the classroom.

If periodic assessment is to be useful to the teacher and the student, the ESOLA must be expanded to include much more. An analysis of student writing samples, portfolios, and response journals can be used to supplement the assessment process. Personal goals sheets along with vocabulary lists can also show gains in classroom performance. Teachers might choose to develop their own tests based on the curriculum which will, in turn, lead to better classroom teaching and increased student learning. The entire process of reporting student progress needs to be expanded so that it will not only show minimal gains but actually reflect all the personal achievement made during the academic year.

Despite its limited testing features, the New Bedford Adult Education Program remains highly successful. Students attend 140-155 hours a year. Personal goals are met as students gain valuable life skills and move from level to level. This year 120 students successfully completed three years in the program.

In conclusion, is the ESOLA test an effective instrument in student placement? Generally, yes. Is the ESOLA test as effective instrument in monitoring student progress? No, it is not. It barely meets program requirement and does not provide any additional information on curriculum or student progress. There is a definite need in our program to reexamine the assessment process and to make it more valid. The ESOLA was not designed with The New Bedford Adult Education Program in mind. It is at this point that we, the program, can begin to review the assessment process. This is a definite program need. Teachers need time to address this issue and develop consistent strategies to complete the assessment portion. With this conclusion, I know which areas I need to address for futue program development.

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Review

New Ways of Classroom Assessment

by
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Nancy Karam,
Lezlie S. Rocka,
Kathryn Carpenter,
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NEW WAYS OF CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT, J.D. Brown Editor, Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), 1600 Cameron St., Suite 300, Alexandria, VA 22314

When I first began reading the introduction to this text, I learned its contents would be a series of activities pertaining to assessing a variety of skills and self assessments by the learners. I thought it would be just another book filled with lesson plans. The facilitators of the ABE/ESOL ACCCESS classes have specific questions about assessment. They want to know explicitly what a portfolio is, how it can successfully fit into classroom learning. I was pleasantly surprised when I looked closer that many of my assessment questions were answered in well-detailed activities that clearly demonstrate alternative methods of assessment.

I felt that the best way to review a text of this kind was to put some of the activities into practice in the classroom. I asked some of the ABE/ESOL facilitators in the ACCCESS program to test the assessments. In giving assignments I tried to vary the activities so there would be representation from each of the five parts of the book. The facilitators critiqued their activities in terms of how they worked, whether they eliminated or added anything, and the reaction from their learners. (See individual facilitator notes at the end of this section.)

The assessment activities in this book could be a starting point for ESOL facilitators to develop further any ideas that will enhance the language process (reading, writing, listening, speaking) in their individual classes. Learners Access to Assessment, p. 60, works well with ESOL learners because it is ongoing and is built into classroom tasks. Learners are willing to participate and the reinforcement of including the entire learning process (listening, speaking, reading and writing) is a good reminder for facilitators that this should be ongoing.

Activities in this text are more challenging and creative than activities found in most ESOL textbooks. Many resources for the ESOL learner do not ask the learner to "stretch" their skills beyond class activities and facilitators are constantly looking to plan activities that assess their students progress/skills. This text presents ideas/ methods that accomplish both.

Questions for pre-goal setting, appendix guidelines, and sample self-assessment questions found in the majority of the activities are well defined. Options for portfolio assessments — one in particular — allow learners to write additional reading exercises which could develop into a learner text to be used in a program. GREAT!

In our experience, ESOL learners enjoy assessing their own oral language process by using videos. There is a good procedure for beginners relating to videos and oral language use. Most of the ESOL learners in our program also like their facilitator to share in the assessment process.

The text does need to address the entry/beginner levels more often. Those listed as such in this text could not be performed comfortably by our learners. Some assessments are too difficult to put into practice because they are developed for more "university level" ESOL. Some are also very time consuming. I found some of the information in the appendix is presented in a negative manner. Some cultures are sensitive to how evaluation/assessment is conducted, whether by a peer or a facilitator (e.g. Appendix, p. 101 — Self Peer/Teacher Assessment of Group Performance, and Appendix, p. 86 — Test Your Talk).

Overall, the volume is good. The editor's notes at the beginning of each section are well written and informative (especially helpful for the new ESOL practitioner) . He weighed both sides of an assessment issue, the advantages as well as the disadvantages for assessing a particular way.

The following are the comments on specific tools as written by the ACCCESS staff. From looking at teachers' responses, it appears that most of the assessment activities tested from this book require a high level of student involvement. For some teachers this gave them ideas about how to organize group work and reminded them of the value of doing things in groups and having a balance of self assessment and teacher/facilitator assessment.

We have highlighted a few of the reviews here. Since we are not able to reprint the tools at this time we chose those that relied less on seeing the tool. We looked at a few so the reader could get a flavor of the kinds of activities the book promotes.

WALK-TALK: ORAL TESTS

I first asked the class to talk about all the things that they learned thus far in our three classes together. Second I had the students make up three questions as if they were giving a quiz or a test based on the materials they learned. I presented several examples and told them that true/false questions could be used. Third, I paired the students up and told them to go outside and ask questions of their partners. For each correct answer a point was awarded.

When I went out to see how things were progressing, I couldn't help but notice how energized and upbeat students were. Most had earned three points; all were laughing and talking about the activity and their individual responses. I asked for feedback from students as to whether we should do this again. Students were enthusiastic.

In using this assessment tool I was able to see the real value in the students working in pairs, in writing their own questions, in speaking these questions to others, in having a good time while actively learning, and in receiving praise from peers the further developed their confidence in their overall communication skills.

—Phyllis Lee

MINI TALK SHOWS IN CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT

In terms of previewing, I followed the four suggested steps with one exception: under number two, I replaced "style of film" with "message or main ideas." I felt that since the students are not experts on film technique, style would most likely be answered so briefly that there would be little opportunity for extended creative speaking.

View and Post Viewing

Here I had students organize their thoughts in groups rather than as individuals. This provided extra interaction as well as opportunities to clarify (debate, question, compare) their responses.

I also had them prepare questions to ask other groups, with each group responsible for the questions on a specific area, e.g. the "character" group questioned the "message group" etc. I felt that the assignment of tasks and narrowing of focus would facilitate the process. Throughout these discussions, I circulated, listened in and when invited intervened.

Feedback and Scoring

Each group presented on their area. I did not grade the presentations. The rest of the class provided each group with spontaneous feedback on their performance.

Caveats and Opinions

For the film I chose "Dances with Wolves." That was thematically related to the content of the course "American Folklore," specifically Native Americans. The 45-minute section of the film I selected concentrated on cross cultural relations and prejudices, the struggle to communicate without a common spoken language, drawing upon other aids (visuals) to enhance communication, and the gradual discovery of a common humanity. These ideas resonated greatly with the students' lives and experiences.

Overall both the students and I found this to be an effective and enjoyable language activity. They felt the assignment of particular tasks (purposeful watching, group assignments) helped with the retention of material. This was confirmed by effusive and insightful discussions following the movie and tasks.

I allowed 90 minutes for the activity including 45 for viewing time. The only criticism was that this was an insufficient amount of time for their discussion. This was a time-consuming assessment activity, but I believe mini talk shows would be an excellent assessment tool for general skills or for specific targeted grammatical items.

—Karyn V.K. Vitali

RUN AND WIN

I used the Run and Win lesson with a group of 16 entry-level ESOL students. It was our fourth session together. I had begun teaching pronouns previous to the suggested lessons. Also I had demonstrated simple verbs like run, walk, speak, etc. I used the lesson as follows:

Format

I used subject and verb cards to teach subject verb agreement.

Materials

Cards made with the pronouns "I, He, She" made up with simple verbs already taught.

Method

Since my students had very limited English it would be quite tedious to try and explain the game portion of the lesson. Instead I modified it by putting them in groups of 5, 5 and 6 at three tables. I passed out the verb cards which were in blue and white envelopes. I instructed them to open a blue card and one white card and say the words they see. I demonstrated this myself at each table. I moved from table to table allowing them to play with the verbs and continued to point out correct combinations. Later they showed me their combinations.

Conclusion

The students really enjoyed the assessment. It gave them an opportunity to use hands-on activities to make discoveries of their own. They wanted more of this. I made up other words that they knew on a purple card such as "floor, wall, book." I also made up yellow cards that say "in, on, and at." Now they can put together whole sentences in this same manner of discovery.

I loved the assessment tool. The tool is not only valuable; it is fun and expandable.

—Jayne Bissonette

TENSE EXCITEMENT THROWING A DIE

The directions were clear. But, as typically happens in the classroom, the lesson did not get presented according to the directions. The copier at the school did not work, so I drew the playing board on the chalk board, and students had to copy it. We used someone else's classroom and they did not leave us much on the chalk board, so I couldn't fit all the words in columns on the board. This was fine because the words were too hard for all but the intermediate students.

So, we adapted the game to suit us. We did one practice run using the word "laugh." I wrote it on the board under the heading "today." I then wrote it again under the heading "yesterday." This time I added the "-ed" ending. We discussed endings of the past tense words. This was actually an introduction for all the beginning A students. We discussed what sound the "-ed" made in the word "laughed". We all put the word "laugh" under the "t" option on the playing board because we make a "t" sound when we pronounce this ending.

We then began the game. We did not roll the die because students did not have a column to choose from. I put a word on the board under "today". The students said the word and then wrote it under "yesterday". The students tried to say the word. I said it correctly and repeated it several times. With them repeating after me, they then chose the playing board square they thought the ending sound fit (t/d/ed). I went around and checked everyone's answer. If they could hear the correct sound. I also demonstrated for them what the word would sound like if it had incorrect endings on it.

We ran out of time, so we only did four words. Most of the students were putting the ending sounds correctly on the playing board by the last two words. All the students seemed to enjoy the challenge of this game. It seemed hard enough to make it fun, but not impossible. It seemed easy for one intermediate A student. Their interest in the game seemed high. They repeated the words over to themselves to listen to endings. They appeared pleased when I came around and told them they had it correct.

I enjoyed using this assessment activity. It was a useful way to introduce and practice past tense ending sounds. I think an idea like this is most useful when any teacher can apply it the way it is needed and most useful in her or his classroom. This lesson withstood this particular test. It was still an informative, learning-filled experience even when it was changed a great deal to fit within the circumstances in which I was applying it. I will use this lesson again for past tense endings and I will use the basic game structure for other sounds that I want to work on with students.

—Lezlie S. Rocka

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